

THIS RELIGION OF  
**ISLAM**  
*(hadha' d-din)*

SAYYID QUTB

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## TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTION

The present work by the martyr for Islam Sayyid Qutb presents a general characterization of the Islamic faith. It does not expound the detailed provisions of Islam for the guidance of mankind, but deals instead with more primary considerations. First, how does the Islamic faith operate in the world? If it is of divine origin, why do we see the Islamic World in its present state of disarray? Why it is necessary and in the interest of mankind to attempt the realization of the path of Islam in the actual circumstances of mankind? How has it been realized in the past and what traces has it left on the life of mankind? What in the present enables us to hop for a renewal of Islamic activity? These questions are answered clearly and succinctly. While being addressed to the contemporary Muslim in order to inspire him with a clear concept of the reality of Islam, the book may also serve as an introduction to Islam for the non-Muslim and, beyond that, as a restatement of the relevance of religion to the contemporary world.

## *CHAPTER I*

### **A PATH FOR MANKIND**

There is a primary and simple fact about the religion of Islam and the manner of its operation in the life of mankind which, for all its simplicity, is frequently forgotten or initially misunderstood. From forgetting or failing to comprehend it, there arises a serious error in examining the religion, both its essential nature and its historic reality, its present and its future.

Some expect Islam, seeing that it is revealed by God, to operate in human life in a magical, extraordinary and incomprehensible manner. They expect it to operate without any regard for human nature, for the innate capacities and material realities of human life, in varying stages of human development and environments.

However, they see that it does not operate in this manner, that limited human abilities and the material realities of human existence interact with it. Sometimes, these two factors are clearly influenced by religion; whereas at other periods their influence is in a direction contrary to that of the faith: they strengthen the passions and desires of people, their weaknesses and shortcomings, thus preventing them from following the call of the faith and travelling along its path.

When they realize this, they encounter an unexpected disappointment, and their trust in the serious-

ness and reality of the religious way of life is damaged. They may even be afflicted by doubt concerning religion as such.

Hence a whole series of errors arises from a single, fundamental error: misunderstanding this faith of Islam and its path, or neglect of this primary, simple truth.

The faith of Islam is a divinely-ordained path for human life. Its realization in the life of mankind depends on the exertions of men themselves, within the limits of their human capacities and the material realities of human existence in a given environment. Working for this aim starts at the point where mankind finds itself on being given the necessary equipment, and it continues to the end of the path within the bounds of human capacities, insofar as these are put to work.

A basic characteristic of Islam is this: that it never forgets for an instant, at any time or place, the nature of man and the limits of his capacities, nor does it neglect the material realities of his existence. Yet, at the same time, it causes him to attain—as has happened at various periods in the past and can always happen, if the necessary efforts are made—a higher point than that reached by any man-made system whatsoever. This is accomplished with ease, comfort, security and moderation.

All error arises from misunderstanding or neglecting the nature of this faith, from expecting the occurrence of miracles of hidden origin, miracles which will transform the nature of man, pay no attention to his limited capacities, and have no regard for the material realities of his environment.

Is Islam not revealed by God? And is not God omnipotent? Why, then, does this faith operate only within the boundaries of restricted human abilities? Why should the results of its operation be affected by human weakness? Why is it not always triumphant, why are its adherents not always victorious? Why should its purity, its elan, on occasion be overcome by weakness, by the passions, by material realities? Why do the wrong sometimes triumph over the righteous, the adherents of this faith?

All these represent questions and doubts, and all arise in the first place from misunderstanding or neglect of the primary nature of this faith and its mode of operation.

Naturally God is capable of transforming human nature, by means of the religion of Islam or any other method. But-may He be exalted! - He has chosen to create man with his present nature in accordance with His own wisdom. He has chosen to make divine guidance the fruit of exertion and desire for it: "Those who strive on our account, them will We guide to our paths." \* He chose too to make human nature operate constantly, without being effaced or put out of action. "The soul and that which regulates it. He inspired it with knowledge of its corruption and its piety. He who purifies it, prospers; and he who corrupts it, loses thereby". He chose that His divinely ordained path for human life should be realized through human exertions, within the limits of human capacities: "Truly God does not change the state of a people until they change that which is within themselves". "Were God not to repel some people by means of others, truly the

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\* All phrases in quotation marks are from the Qur'an, unless otherwise specified.

earth would be corrupted". He has chosen thereby to raise men to a point of excellence corresponding to the exertions he has made, the abilities he has applied, and the patience with which he has met misfortune for the sake of realizing this divinely ordained path, of removing evil from himself and from life around him: "Did the people imagine that they would say: we have believed, and they would not be tested? We have tested those before them, and surely God knows the truthful and God knows the liars".

None of God's creation has the right to ask Him — may He be exalted! - why He has chosen all this and willed it to be. None of His creation - may He be exalted! - has the right - since he is not a god, has no knowledge nor the possibility of knowledge - to ask concerning the general system of creation, that system whose results are in the nature of every created being.

'Why', in this connection, is a question asked neither by a serious believer nor by a serious atheist. The serious believer will not ask it because he is too polite towards God - Whose essence, attributes and qualities he knows - and too well aware of the limited nature of his human perception which is not equipped to operate in this realm. The serious atheist will not ask for he does not recognize the existence of God at all. Were he to recognize His divinity, he would know too His glory and the implications of His divinity. "He is not asked concerning what he does, yet they are so asked". For He alone is omniscient, aware of what He does.

This is a question asked only by the frivolous, neither a serious believer nor a serious atheist. There-

fore, no attention is to be paid to it, and it is not to be taken seriously. It is asked by one ignorant of the nature of divinity and its attributes. The only way to instruct the ignorant is not by direct answer, but by expounding to them the nature and attributes of divinity. Then they will either recognize and accept them, becoming believers, or they will deny and reject them and become atheists. The controversy is thereby concluded, unless dispute arises. And if controversy turns into dispute, the Muslim is not permitted to continue with it.

The conclusion we arrive at in this respect is the following: that none of God's creation - may He be exalted! - has the right to ask why He has chosen to create man with the nature he has; why He has chosen to make the operation of this nature permanent and uninterrupted; and why He has chosen to make the divinely ordained path for human life be realized through human existence, rather than enforcing it miraculously, through obscure, hidden means.

It is however the duty of every single one of His creation to perceive and take notice of these facts, and to observe them in operation in human life. He should interpret the facts of human history in their light, understanding their historical line of development on the one hand and knowing how to confront and influence that line of development on the other. Further, he should live with the wisdom and power of God, and have the correct attitude towards them.

This divine path, represented in its final stage by Islam, as entrusted to Muhammad s.a.w. - is not brought into being in the world, in the realm of humanity, simply by virtue of its revelation by God. It



is not brought into being by being preached and proclaimed to the people. It is not brought into being by divine enforcement, in the same way that God enforce His will in the ordering of the firmament and the revolution of the planets. It is brought into being by a group of people undertaking the task, believing in it completely and conforming to it as closely as possible, trying to bring it into being in the hearts and lives of other too; striving to this end with all, they possess. They struggle against human weakness and human passion within themselves, they struggle against those whom weakness and passion impel to resist divine guidance. They attain thereby, in the realization of the divine path, a point made possible by human nature and permitted material realities. They begin with man as he stands and do not neglect his actual state and demands as he passes through and traverses the stages of the divinely ordained path. This group will triumph over their own souls and those of others at times, and at other times will be routed by their own souls and those of others, in accordance with the efforts they expend and the means they choose for the battle, suitable for the circumstances and the needs of the age. More important in determining victory or defeat is however the degree to which they truly, in themselves, represent this path, and are able to give it practical expression in their personal conduct and behavior.

This is the nature of the faith of Islam and the mode of its operation. This is its plan for action and its method. This is the truth that God wished to teach the Muslim community when He said: "truly God does not change the state of a people until they change that

which is within themselves"; "were God not to repel some people by means of others, truly the earth would be corrupted"; and "those who strive on Our account, them will We guide to our paths".

This is the truth that God wished to teach the Muslim community at the battle of Uhud when it failed to represent the true nature of the faith in its own self at certain stages in the battle. It neglected or forgot the primary truth, imagining that inevitable victory was a consequence of their being Muslim. God — may He be exalted! — said to them: "And when you were afflicted with a calamity similar to one already experienced, you said: How is this? Say: it is from yourselves". He also said to them: "God made true His promise that you might test them with His permission. Yet you failed and disputed concerning the matter. You rebelled after He had shown you what you love. There are those among you who desire the world, and those too who desire the hereafter. Then he turned you away from them that He might test you".

The Muslim community learned this truth at the battle of Uhud, not by words of reproach, but through blood and suffering. It paid a high price: defeat after victory; loss instead of booty; a wound that left none unaffected; noble martyrs including Hamza, the foremost of all martyrs — may God be pleased with him! — and worse and more serious than this for the whole Muslim community, the wounding of the Prophet of God s.a.w. — the blow struck at his noble head, the fracture of a tooth in his mouth. He fell on his side in the pit which had been dug by Abu Amr, the evil ally of the Quraysh, as an ambush for the Muslims, while the polytheists were chasing him. He was alone with

a few of his companions who were martyred one after the other while defending him. One of them, Abu Dajana, shielded him with his back against the arrows of the polytheists. An arrow hit him in the back but he did not move until the believers returned from their route, to receive the hard and bitter lesson!

It is thus clear that the realization of the divine path has been left to human exertions. The fact that it is brought into being within the limits of human capacities rectifies the human soul and reforms human life. We say this not in order to supply as cause for God's will in determining the matter as He has, but only in order to point out a practical observation of the effects of this working of His will in the life of His worshippers.

The truth of the faith is not fully established until a struggle is undertaken on its behalf among people. A struggle against their unwillingness and their reluctance, a struggle to remove them from this state to that of Islam and truth. A struggle by word of mouth, by propagation, by exposition, by refuting the false and baseless with a statement of the truth proclaimed by Islam. A struggle too physically to remove obstacles from the path of right guidance when it is infested by brute force and open violence. In this struggle misfortune and suffering will be encountered, and patience will be necessary. In times of victory too patience is needed: it is then perhaps more difficult. Then one becomes steadfast and unwavering, pursuing the path of the faith righteously and unswervingly.

This struggle is necessary on the part of the individual for he struggles against himself while struggling against other people, and thereby horizons are opened to him in the faith which would never be

opened to him if he were to sit immobile and at rest. He perceives facts concerning people and life which he could not realize in any other way. His soul, his feelings, his imagination, his habits, his nature, his reactions and responses — all are brought to a point of development which he could not have attained without this hard and bitter experience.

This, among other matters, is implied in God's saying: "Were God not to repel some men by means of others, truly the earth would be corrupted". The first to be corrupted are human souls, by means of stagnation overtaking the spirit, weakening the will and paralysing it. Then the whole of life is subject to stagnation, or is able to operate only within the sphere of the passions, as happens to nations afflicted with luxury.

This too is part of the nature in which God created man. He caused the well-being of this nature to reside in struggling for the establishment of the divine path for human life, by means of human exertion and within the bounds of human capacities.

Moreover, this struggle and its accompanying trails is the practical means for purifying the ranks of the community — after the initial purification of the individual soul — of ridding it of the idle and the hypocrites, of those of weak heart and weak character, of tricksters and deceivers.

This is the truth God wishes to teach the Muslim community when He exposes it to trial and testing. It is then that the recesses of souls become known, and the ranks become clarified, beneath the hammer of trial, the hardship of experience and the bitterness of suffering.

This is the truth God wished to teach the Muslim community after the battle of Uhud, when He said in reply to the Muslims' questions of 'How is this?' "Say: this is from yourselves". He then continues: "That which befell you on the day the two groups met was with the permission of God, that He might know the believers and know the hypocrites". "God did not place the believers in the state where you find yourselves for any purpose but this: that He might distinguish the evil from the good".... "So that God might know the believers and take martyrs from among you — God does not love the wrongdoers — so that He might test those who have believed and annihilate the unbelievers". All this becomes rooted in their minds, while at the same time their calamity was caused by shortcomings in applying the complete meaning of the faith in their thoughts and actions during the battle. In the end, it was of benefit for them, through God's grace and forgiveness of their fault, and because its consequences were a lesson for them, and a means of purifying themselves and their risks.

With regard to the true nature of the faith and the mode of its operation, we must add to the remarks already made a supplementary observation.

The fact that the realization of this divinely ordained path is left to human efforts, within the limits of human capacities and of the material realities of human life at various stages of development and in various environments, does not imply the final and definite independence of man in this matter, or his isolation from the divine will and planning, the aid and assistance of God. To regard the matter in this manner would be in fundamental contradiction with the Islamic way of thought.

We have already remarked that God Almighty helps the one who struggles for the sake of right guidance: "And those who struggle for our sake, We guide them to Our paths". "God does not change the state of a people until they change that which is within them".

These two quotations indicate to us the relation between human exertions and the aid dispensed by God to humanity; by means of this aid, men will attain the good, the right guidance and the virtue for which they strive.

It is ultimately God's will which is decisive, and without which man by himself will attain nothing. However, this will aid those who know its method of operation, request its help and seek to attain the pleasure of God.

Despite all this, it is divine predestination which encompasses human beings and events, and trails, together with their benefit for the righteous, take place in accordance with it.

Thus, after the battle of Uhud God ALmighty expounds to the Muslim community the causes of victory and defeat, indicating too the divine wisdom behind trails and both victory and defeat: "God made true His promise that you test them with His permission. Yet you failed and dispute concerning the matter. You rebelled after He had shown you what you love. There are those among you who desire the world and those too who desire the hereafter. Then He turned you away from them that He might test you". His purpose too was to demonstrate to them His comprehensive path, and His absolute will and irresistible power behind all causes and-events. "If a

wound afflicts you, then people have been afflicted with a wound like it; we cause such fortune to rotate among the people. It is too so that God may know those who believe and take from among you martyrs — God does not love the wrongdoers — and to purify the believers and to annihilate the unbelievers”.

It is, then, in the last analysis, the plan, the will, the decree of God, for the accomplishment of what He intends beyond causes and events. This is the matter concerning which none may ask God Almighty, and the greatest truth of the faith. Unless it be firmly established in a soul, the faith of that soul is not complete. This is the supplementary remark we felt it necessary to add to this chapter.

The Muslim whose heart knows instinctively the nature of the faith will find here no contradiction, nor is there any with the contents of the Book of God.

## CHAPTER II

### A UNIQUE PATH

It is possible that someone will now say: if Islam, the divinely ordained path for mankind, cannot be established in the world and the realm of humanity other than by human exertion, with the limits of human capacities and the material realities of human existence in different environments, what then distinguishes it from man-made paths, established by men for themselves, and permitting them to attain a result in accordance with their exertions, their capacities and circumstances? Why must we try to fulfill that path in particular, for it needs human effort like any other path? None of it is to be realized within the life of people, within the bounds of human nature and their normal capacities and material circumstances.

First we are obliged to examine the nature of that path so that we may ourselves realize what is Islam. The first pillar of Islam is that we bear witness that there is no god other than God and that Muhammad is the Prophet of God. The approximate meaning of bearing witness that there is no god other than God is this: God is the exclusive possessor of divinity, and none of His creation shares in any of the aspects or properties of divinity. The first aspect of divinity is absolute rule, whence arises the right to legislate for His worshippers, to ordain paths for their lives, to prescribe values on which their lives should be based. It is not possible to bear witness that there is no god other than God without recognizing that God alone



has the right to ordain the path which human life should follow, and without attempting to establish that path, and none other, in human life. Anyone who claims for himself the right to lay down a path for the life of a group of human beings has claimed also the right of divinity over them; for he claims the greatest of all aspects of divinity. Bearing witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God means approximately admitting that this path has been conveyed to from God; that it is truly God's path for the life of mankind; and that it is the only path we are obliged to follow and implement in human life.

Hence we have a duty to attempt the realization of this path, so that we may ourselves realize the attribute of Muslim which we claim. This is possible only through bearing witness that there is no god but God and that Muhammad is His Prophet. This profession of faith is possible only by recognizing God as the sole possessor of divinity, and alone entitled to lay down a path for human life. We must attempt the realization of that path conveyed to us from God by Muhammad s.a.w.

We must do so for reasons connected with the nature of that path itself. It is the only path which realizes the nobility of man, grants him true freedom and releases him from slavery. It is the only path which enables him to liberate himself completely within the limits of his humanity and his service of God, for service of God releases man from servitude to others. There is no other path in the world possessing this quality. For Islam, by recognizing God Almighty as the sole possessor of divinity, and hence as the sole possessor of the right to legislate for the life

of humanity, leaves only one GOD and one master for humanity. It prevents some men from being the gods of others with legislative and directive rights over them, as a result of the servitude of those who accord these gods the aspects of divinity.

The divine path is unique in this respect. Not verbally or supposedly, but in truth and in fact. Therefore the message of all the prophets a.s. was that God is the sole possessor of divinity, and to deny to any of His creation any of the aspects of deity, even if they be deified and claim the right to legislate for human life, supported by those who do not believe in the unity of God.

God said concerning the Christians and Jews: "They have taken their rabbis and priests as lords other than God; also the Christ, son of Mary. Yet they were ordered to worship one God only. There is no God other than He. He is glorified above that which they ascribe to Him". They were not in reality worshipping the rabbis and priests; they were only according to them the right to legislate in addition to God, to lay down a path for human life. God said concerning them: "They have taken them as lords". They have flouted God's command concerning monotheism, and attribute partners to Him.

The traditionists Imam Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and Ibn Jarir relate concerning Udayy ibn Hatim that when he heard the call of the Prophet s.a.w. he fled to Syria. Before the proclamation of Islam he had accepted Christianity. His sister and a group of his relatives fell into captivity but his sister was released by the Prophet s.a.w. She sought out her brother and aroused his interest in Islam, encouraging him to go before the

Prophet. Udayy came to Madina. He was one of the chiefs of the Tayy tribe, his father being the Hatim renowned for his generosity, so attention was aroused by his arrival in Madina. As he entered the presence of the Prophet, wearing a golden cross around his neck, the Prophet was reciting the verse: "They have taken their rabbis and priests as lords besides God". Udayy said: 'They do not worship them'. The Prophet replied: 'Indeed they do! The rabbis and priests have made the lawful to them unlawful, and the unlawful, lawful. They have followed them, and this is their worship of them'.

As Said remarked: 'Ask advice of men, but compare it with the Book of God'. God Almighty said: "They were ordered to worship one God only", and if this one God forbids a thing, it is unlawful; if He permits it, it is lawful; if He legislates concerning a matter, He should be obeyed; if He commands, His command should be carried out.

Only Islam restricts its worship to God, since it regards Him alone as possessing sovereignty and the right to ordain a path for the life of mankind. Hence it is only Islam that liberates man from servitude to other than God, and hence too we are obliged to attempt its implementation, and that of no other path.

A further reason is that the divine character of Islam means that it is the only path free of the results of human desires, human weaknesses and human self-interest. It is free from any attempt to gain self-interest by means of legislating for the benefit of that individual, his family, class, people or race. The ordainer of the path of Islam is God Almighty, the Lord of all mankind. He does not legislate for His own sake,

or for that of one class of mankind in preference to another, one people in preference to another, or one race in preference to another.

Human legislation, as laid down by a ruling individual, family, class, nation or race, cannot possibly, in the light of human nature, be unaffected by the desires and interests of the legislators.

When the path ordained by God is that which rules human life, this defect disappears, and true, complete and comprehensive justice is obtained, that justice which cannot be reached by any human, man-made system. There is nothing in any man-made system which will free it of the factors of human desire, human weakness and attachment of self-interest in one form or the other.

There are then lofty divine instructions for the erection of complete and comprehensive justice, untouched by human passion or considerations of relationship. God said to the Muslim community: "O you who believe! Be upright before God, witnesses to equity. Let not the hatred of a people inspire you to act with other than justice. Act justly, for that is closer to piety. Fear God, for God is aware of what you do."

It might be asked at this point: what are the guarantees that make the Muslim community establish the justice to which they are summoned and commanded by God?

The real guarantee of the entire Islamic program is contained in the conscience of the individual Muslim, and arises from his faith. Where faith in this religion exists, there too will be the strongest of guarantees. The Muslims learn from their religion that

the bases of their existence, their triumph and power in this world, are all founded on faithfulness to these instructions. Otherwise their being is exposed to decline, their victory turns into defeat and they are abased. They hear God saying to them: "God gives victory to whom He pleases. Truly God is powerful, mighty. (He gives victory) to those who, if He gives them power on earth, establish the prayer, pay the purifying due, enjoin good and forbid evil. To God belongs the end of all affairs". They are convinced that God Almighty will pay them no attention if they deviate from His path.

The Muslim community itself is the real guarantee for the fulfilment of these instructions, for it rests on a conviction, and takes upon itself what God has ordained for it. It sees in every neglect or shortcoming the harbinger of an evil to overtake it, not only the wrongdoers in its ranks.

So we are obliged to fulfill this path, to establish that complete and comprehensive justice which cannot be attained by any other than this unique path.

A further reason is that this path alone is free of the results of human ignorance and human shortcomings, as it is free of the results of human weakness. Its ordainer is the Creator of the human being, and He therefore knows what is in his interest. He is aware of the subtleties of his make-up and composition, and the worldly circumstances that accompany him throughout his life. When ordaining a path for man, He takes account of all these factors, which men, either individually or collectively, in any age, are incapable of comprehending in their totality. Certain of these factors require the accumulation of experience con-

cerning all manifestations of human life in the past, present and future — this being impossible — while others need awareness of all the details and circumstances surrounding man, this too being out of the question. In addition, human perception is unable to form an infallibly correct judgment concerning even the experiences and phenomena of which it is aware. It is condemned to this disability by its partial, non-absolute nature, and by the influence upon it of passions and weaknesses. It is therefore unsuited for laying down a path for human life.

Thus it is that God says: "Were the truth to follow their passions, the heavens and the earth would be ruined". Similarly: "We made for you a law, so follow it, and not the fancies of those who have no knowledge".

None of the people have knowledge, that absolute knowledge which is required for laying down a path human life. They are equipped with nothing but fancies and ignorance when they undertake the task which is no concern of theirs and does not properly belong to them. Their claim to one of the properties of divinity is a great sin, and a great evil.

A further reason for the implementation of this path is the fact that it alone erects a system for human life on a comprehensive view of existence and man's place therein, and of the true purpose of human existence — not as it is defined by the ignorance, weakness and illusion of humanity.

This is the only firm and healthy basis for the erection of a nature system of human life. Any system of human life which does not rest on the foundation of a comprehensive view of existence is deprived of

natural roots; it is an artificial system that cannot live long. It is a source of misery for humanity as long as it exists among them, until their nature destroys it and they return to their natural basis.

This view of existence contained by the divinely ordained path is the only correct one. For it proceeds from the Creator of existence, the Creator of man, Who knows the true nature of existence and man. Any other view or interpretation of existence and man's position in it, of the purpose of man's creation, is a deficient one, for existence is greater than man, and hence he cannot interpret it fully. Definition of the purpose of human existence requires the knowledge of the Creator of man and of His will in the creation of man. It further requires immunity from illusion, something unattainable for man.

If one surveys the efforts of philosophy to interpret human existence, man's place in it and the purpose of human existence, one encounters an odd assortment of answers, some of them simply ridiculous in their idiocy. One is surprised that such ideas can have emerged from a "Philosopher" until one remembers that this philosopher too is a man, equipped only with the tool of human reason. This is not the realm of human reason, and the philosophers have strayed into a region where they have no lamp to guide them other than that candle granted them by God for use on different matters and in different realm where it will shed some light. That realm is the viceregency of God on earth, in accordance with the divinely ordained path, depending on the grace and assistance of God, as is understood from a comprehensive interpretation on the basis of which may arise a

healthy human way of thought, and a system of human life with natural roots.

Hence we are obliged to attempt the realization of this path in order to establish a system of human life with natural roots, for there is no other path which possesses this necessary quality.

A final reason for attempting the realization of this path is that it alone is in conformity with the overall plan of being. Man should not follow a path not in conformity therewith, since he is obliged to live within its framework, and to cooperate in every respect with the overall plan of being.

It is only harmony between the path for human life and that of being that guarantees for man and cooperation of the awesome forces of nature, and permits him to avoid conflict with them. If he conflicts with them, he will be destroyed and annihilated, and he will not fulfill his duty of viceregency of God on earth, that duty God has willed for him. If however he conforms to the norms of created being, he will possess knowledge of its secrets and know how to make use of them in his life. Then fire will not consume him; instead he will use it for cooking, heating and light.

Human nature conforms basically to the norms of being. When man's way of life disregards these norms, not only will he come into conflict with the awesome forces of nature, but also with his own nature. He will be miserable, bewildered and anxious, living like present-day man in acute torment, despite all the triumphs of modern science and all the conveniences of material civilization.

Present-day humanity is afflicted with misery, anxiety, bewilderment and confusion; it flees from its



true self by taking recourse to opium, hashish and alcohol, to a craze for speed, to idiotic adventures. All this despite material prosperity, high productivity and a life of each with abundant leisure. In fact, this emptiness and confusion increase in proportion to material prosperity and convenience.

This bitter emptiness pursues man like a fearsome ghost. He flees from it, but inevitably it overtakes him.

The first impression gained by anyone visiting the prosperous, wealthy countries of the world — headed by America and Sweden — is that the people are fleeing from ghost pursuing them, fleeing from their own inner natures. He will quickly realize that this material prosperity, sensual enjoyment and sexual satiation lead to a sinking into the morass of nervous and psychological disease, sexual perversion, constant anxiety, illness and lunacy, frequent crime, and the lack of any human dignity in life.

Humanity has scored great triumphs, thanks to science, in the field of medicine and the cure of physical disease. It has discovered new drugs and means of diagnosis and treatment; in particular we may mention penicillin and myosin.

In the sphere of industrial production too almost miraculous results have been achieved, and progress and advance are continuing. Similar achievements in the exploration of space, in the construction of artificial satellites and space stations, have been made, and more may be expected.

But what is the effect of all this on human life? On the spiritual life of humanity? Has it found security?

Has it found peace? By no means! It has found misery, anxiety and fear. No progress has been made in the formulation of the aims of human life and the purpose of human existence. When one compares the concept held by a 'civilized' man of the purpose of human existence with the Islamic concept, present-day civilization appears as a curse dragging human feelings down into the morass.

For example in America new gods are worshipped, which are thought to be the aim of human existence — the god of property, the god of pleasure, the god of fame, the god of productivity! Thus it is that in America men cannot find themselves, for they cannot find the purpose of their existence. The same is true of other states of ignorance, where similar gods are worshipped, and people cannot find the true God.

Therefore we are bound to attempt the realization of the divinely ordained path for human life, to turn humanity back towards its One True God; towards a purpose for existence worthy of the rank of human being; towards the norms that embrace all creation including man.

This is the truth established by the Holy Qur'an. It rejects the view of those who wish to follow other than the law of God and the way of life He has ordained.

"Do they desire other than the way of God, while all that is in the heavens and earth has submitted to Him, willingly or unwillingly? And they too will be brought back before Him."

## *CHAPTER III*

### **AN EASY PATH**

It might then be objected: But humanity will not be able long to persist on this unique and lofty path. A group or community, having once established it for a period, will then abandon it and humanity will turn to other paths which, while not causing it to attain the same summits, will not impose on man the same hard efforts.

At first sight this objection appears to be valid. Many writers have attempted to implant this idea in people's minds, to persuade them that the path of Islam is impractical and unrealistic; too much for human nature to support for more than a time; that it is only an idealistic summons to reach after unattainable horizons. They have had a cunning aim behind this attempt: to spread despair at the possibility of reconstructing life in accordance with the path of Islam, and to frustrate efforts being made in that direction. These cunning ones have found in the disorders that began with the murder of Uthman, the subsequent conflict between Ali and Muawiya and related events a fertile ground for attempting to prove their vile contention, sometimes by implication and sometimes explicitly, as circumstances dictate.

They are unintentionally helped in this aim by those sincere believers who are disturbed by the fact that these events should have interrupted the rise of Islam in that glorious period of history. They involved too a deviation from the concept of government that

prevailed in the time of the Prophet s.a.w. and his first two successors. Similarly the conduct of some leaders of the community thereafter deviated from Islamic norms. Because of their excessive sensitivity in this respect, they imagine that all forms of Islamic advance stopped after the brief period of the Caliphate. They propound this view with the utmost sincerity and out of their admiration for the summit of conduct attained by the Prophet and the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

The whole matter requires however careful re-examination, with particular attention to the human factors involved. The nature of the faith should be understood, and its method for guiding the steps of humanity over a long period, in different environments and circumstances.

First of all, it is not true that the path of Islam imposes on the soul of man exertions harder than he is able to bear or to endure for more than a short time.

It is indeed a sublime path. But it is at the same time a natural path, and the capital on which it relies and which it spends is none other than essential human nature. Its distinguishing feature is that it knows from the very beginning how to obtain access to this capital.

From the outset it is able to find its way to the human soul. It knows how it may enter, and it does so gently. It knows the strength and capacities of the human soul, and it never exceeds them. It knows its needs and necessities, and responds to them. It knows too its pure, constructive potentialities, and it puts them to work for positive ends.

Despite all its sublimity and loftiness, it is a path essentially for man, for man living here in this world. It takes into consideration the nature of man with all its component parts, and the composition of man also.

When the soul is at one with its true nature, when its needs and necessities are fulfilled, when its constructive capacities are released, then with ease and without compulsion it will flow in natural harmony with life, will ascend to the lofty summit ordained for it. On its long path to this goal, it will find ease, security and confidence.

Those who doubt and arouse doubt concerning the possibility of establishing the path of Islam are terrified by its morality, by the purity of the moral element in its make-up. They are scared by the duties of this morality, imagining them to be fetters and obstacles preventing man from striving for what he desires, what his natural instincts impel him towards.

This is an illusion arising from a misunderstanding of the essential nature of the Islamic faith.

The morality of Islam does not consist of a mere collection of fetters, obstacles and prohibitions. It is in its essence a constructive and positive force, a motive force for continual development and self-realization in the course of that development. This development however is characterized by total purity.

Positiveness and activity have a moral aspect in the path of Islam. Idleness and negativism are immoral, since they contradict the purpose of human existence, as conceived of by Islam, namely the vice-regency of God on earth, and the use of all that God

has subordinated to man for the purposes of constructive activity.

Effort for the realization of the good and the combating of evil is an ethical matter, in which basic elements of the human personality are released. In the view of Islam, obedience to God represents the ethical aspect in a sublime manner.

When we take the ethical aspects which appear to be bounds and fetters, we find them in reality to be aspects of movement, liberation and vitality.

Let us take for example self-restraint from indulgence of forbidden sexual passion. It appears to be a bond and an obstacle. But in reality it represents a liberation from slavery to these passions, release from servitude to them, and the exaltation of human will, so that the indulgence of these passions may be chosen within the sphere of legitimate enjoyment decreed by God.

Another example is the ethical injunction to charity. It appears to be a burden on the self, preventing it from the enjoyment of all its possessions and influencing others thereby. In reality however it is a release from covetousness and triumph over greed, an expansion of consciousness of the public good, which is not restricted within the framework of the individual. It is then a release, a liberation.

We do not have the space to multiply examples. These must suffice to give an idea of the true nature of the moral "bonds" in the Islamic path.

Islam regards sins and vices as bonds and fetters which imprison the human soul, weigh it down and drag it into the abyss. It counts release from the ties

of base desires as true liberation, and its entire moral system is based on this foundation.

This is because it regards the basis of human nature as the disposition to good: Man was created in the fairest of natures. He descends to the lowest depths whenever he submits to a way of life other than that ordained by God: "We created man with the fairest of natures, and then caused him to descend to the lowest depths, except those who believe and perform good works". Therefore, the way of life consonant with man's essential nature is that which helps him to escape from the bonds which attach themselves to his virtuous disposition, and to liberate himself from the fetters of the passions.

Islam aspires to lead human society in order to bring into being circumstances and conditions which will liberate the individual from perversions that have latched on to his essential nature; permit the virtuous and constructive forces within him to appear and establish their supremacy; and remove the obstacles which prevent his true nature from striving towards the good in which it was created.

Those who imagine that the morality of Islam makes of it a heavy burden for humanity so as to prevent its realization in their lives, derive this belief from the tribulations undergone by the individual Muslim living in a society which is not governed by Islam. In such circumstances, the morality of Islam is in reality a heavy burden; it almost crushes those individuals who live with their pure Islam in the polluted society of ignorance.

This however, is not the natural situation foreseen by Islam, for it supposes its pure, sublime

morality to be supreme. Islam is a realistic system, and it therefore supposes that the people who live according to its path will be living in an Islamically governed society. In such a society good, virtue and purity will be well-known and protected by the leaders of the community. Evil, vice and impurity will be rejected and banished by the dominant forces in society.

When matters are rectified in this manner, the Islamic way of life becomes an extremely easy one. In fact, opposition to this way of life on the part of individuals will become difficult; it will be difficult for them to indulge in base passions, and to follow evil and vice. All the forces dominating society — in addition to the force of the true nature of man — will stand against them, and make their divergent path hard and difficult.

Hence Islam demands that the absolute control of human society belong to God and the path laid down by God; it denies this control to any of God's creation, and to any path laid down by other than God. This it would consider complete infidelity and a clear ascription of partners to God, for, as we have already pointed out, Islam insists on attribution of divinity to God Almighty alone, and control of human society by His path alone. This is the direct meaning of bearing witness that there is none to be worshipped other than God.

Islam also prescribes the erection of an Islamic society in the aegis of which the Muslim individual can live his religion, in accordance with the character given him thereby. The Islamic concept of existence as a whole, and of the aim of human existence in particular, differs fundamentally from all man-made



imaginings. These picture man in isolation from the guidance of God in all times and places. This is a basic difference concerning which no compromise is possible.

A specific environment is then indispensable for the life of this concept, an environment with its own specific values. This cannot be the environment of a system based on ignorance of divine guidance. It will live according to the concept of Islam and the way of life springing therefrom; it will breathe naturally in accordance with its own being, without internal obstacles to slow down or prevent this growth, and without external obstacles to crush it.

In such an environment the Muslim individual will live a natural and easy life, for he will breathe naturally, find assistance in the performance of good deeds, and experience both inner and social comfort in following Islamic morality.

Without this environment the life of the individual become impossible, or at least extremely difficult. Therefore whoever wishes to be a Muslim should know that he cannot devote himself to his practice of Islam. He is mistaken if he imagines that he can realize his Islam as an individual lost in the midst of a society ignorant of divine guidance.

The Islamic path is easy, when one lives in an Islamic environment. It presupposes such an environment to be indispensable, and all its directives are based on this foundation.

It is similarly untrue that it imposes on mankind more strenuous efforts than are necessary for men living according to systems emanating from other than God.

Such systems — those adopted by mankind in isolation from the guidance of God at any time or place — are inevitably affected by the results of human ignorance, human weakness and human folly, at the very best. Hence in whole or in part they will conflict with human nature, and the soul of mankind will suffer as a result.

They are similarly characterized by partial cures and solutions for human problems. They will solve one aspect but aggravate another, and this as a direct result of their deficient vision which fails to grasp all aspects simultaneously. When they cure the new illness that arose out of their cure of the first illness, yet another illness will arise, and so on indefinitely. Study of the changes and stages gone through by man-made systems bears witness to this. Without doubt, this imposes on mankind exertions harder than those involved in that perfect and comprehensive system which is in accord with essential human nature, which regards problems from all their aspects, prescribes for them a complete and comprehensive solution, and arises from a complete and comprehensive vision.

Whoever studies the record of human suffering that has arisen from man-made systems throughout history, cannot dare to say that its divinely ordained path with all its obligations and morality, imposes on mankind exertions greater than those imposed by man-made systems.

The easiest aspect of this path, which aims to attain a sublime peak, is that it does not ignore the length of the road, it does not force the pace, it does not skip stages; the space before it is wide and

extensive. It is not contained within the life-span of an individual, it is not goaded on by fear of being overtaken by death before the distant aim is achieved, as are the protagonists of earthly systems and beliefs. These latter must complete the task in a single generation, and violate the tranquility of human nature in order to leap forward to the realization of a glittering aim. They have no patience with the tranquil, natural assured pace. Bloodbaths mark their progress along their chosen path, values are destroyed and standards upset. Finally they themselves are destroyed beneath the hammerblows of human nature which their artificial tools are incapable of resisting.

The path of Islam is easy and lenient. It encourages human nature to take one direction, discourages it from taking another direction, and strengthens it when it weakens. But it never breaks or destroys it, or attempts to do so. It is patient with it as the wise and the knowing are patient, like him who is confident of the realization of the long-term aim, which cannot be attained in one rush, or even in two, three, ten, a hundred or a thousand! All that is demanded is the exertion of effort to progress along the path.

As the lofty tree grows after striking its roots deep in the soil, and its branches reach out and intertwine, so too this way of life grows in the souls and in the world. It expands slowly and softly, with assurance and confidence. Finally it will be what God has willed it to be.

Islam sows its seeds and stands guard over them, leaving them to grow in natural tranquility, and being assured of the ultimate aim. Whatever slowness or

retreat is observed, this is but in accordance with human nature. Sometimes plants are covered over by the sand, are consumed by worms, are burnt by thirst, are flooded with water, are afflicted with various catastrophes. But the intelligent cultivator knows that his plants will survive and grow, that ultimately they will surmount all catastrophes. He does not panic or attempt to ripen them by unnatural means. Thus too Islam is characterized by ease, and its obligations sit light upon the souls of mankind.

We do not need at this point to speak of the sufferings inflicted upon mankind by the violence of man-made systems and their protagonists. The wretchedness it is experiencing all over the world is enough. Everywhere the intelligent are raising cries of alarm and warning.

Finally, it is not true that this system of Islam did not survive for long, as some say with cunning and other with pride! The spiritual, social and political structure that was erected on the basis of this sublime, unique system, in the space of a single century or even half a century, has continued to resist all the catastrophes that have beset it, and all the attacks to which it has been exposed, for more than a thousand years.

These terrible factors have insistently attacked and infiltrated its bases, and behind them stand all the powers of the world of ignorance of divine guidance. They have not been able to destroy it, but with the passage of time, with concentration and watchfulness, with determination and persistence, they have been gradually eroding it, and diverting it little by little from its principles, until eventually it has become

weakened and seriously threatened. Nonetheless, up to the present they have been unable to distort its doctrinal foundations, and these doctrines are available for fresh investigation, to be embraced by a new generation.

This is the basic distinction between the divinely ordained path and man-made paths.

There is indeed a period of excellence in the history of this path — and indeed in the history of all mankind — which is still the sublime summit towards which necks are craned and gazes directed, still there in its exalted place.

The period of excellence is a short one indeed.

It is not the whole of Islamic history, but a beacon erected by God so that man might reach up to it and try to attain it; might renew his hopes of arriving at the sublime submit by rising in upward ascent. God assigned to this period its place in the ascent, the place of a guiding beacon.

The fact is that this period was not the result of an unrepeatable miracle; rather it was the fruit of human exertion made by the first Muslim community. It can be achieved whenever that exertion is again made.

But that exertion undertaken by a select group of humanity can be model for many generations of humanity to come, not merely one generation. Whether or not it will be successful in one generation or another depends on the will of God, so that the model may take on a realistic form and encourage its emulation. It is then left to succeeding generations of mankind to attempt again to attain it.

The path continued to play its role, after that period of excellence, in broad areas of human life; continued to act upon the ideas, the history and the situation of mankind for many centuries; and left many traces on the life of the whole of humanity. It is precisely this that enables us to hope that humanity today may again strive towards the summits.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN EFFECTIVE PATH

This brilliant illumination achieved a permanent influence on the life of mankind, with its luster and sublimity, its splendor and perfection. It left permanent traces in the history of mankind as a result of which the present generation of humanity is better able than all other generations — after that select group of the first generation — to strive for the attainment of Islam. It is aided by the legacy bequeathed in ideas, values, systems, circumstances.

We will try in this chapter — as briefly as is consistent with the nature of this work — to encompass some of the illuminations of that bright and unique lamp, not only in the history of the Islamic community, but also in the history of mankind as a whole.

The period of excellence at the beginning of Islam was able to create, in the reality of human existence, a number of ideal personages who were the representatives of a higher humanity, in a manner unequalled before or since that time. By comparison all the figures who arose in paths other than that of Islam appear as dwarfs, beings who have not attained full maturity, or at least not fully rounded beings.

These ideal personages produced by the divinely ordained path in that short period were not a few individuals to be counted on one's fingers, but a great concourse. The student of the matter wonders

how in all their sublimity and maturity they attained such numbers, in so short and restricted a period. He is unable to account for their appearance on this large scale, at this exceptional level, with such a variety of models, unless he relates this unique phenomenon to the action of that unique path of life — Islam.

It is important for us to know that those people who represented a higher humanity, models unique in their sublimity, by comparison with whom he figures later centuries appear to be but dwarfs of deficient beings, who realize the divinely ordained path in their own lives in this remarkable manner, were nonetheless human beings, who had not left the bounds of their nature or essential disposition, nor suppressed any of the constructive capacities. They did not impose on themselves exertion beyond their capacities, but devoted themselves to all human activities, and enjoyed all the legitimate pleasures which were allotted to them in their environment and age. They acted wrongly and correctly, they stumbled and rose again, they were sometimes best by human weakness — like the rest of mankind — and fighting against it were sometimes triumphant.

It is highly important to realize this fact. It gives mankind a strong hope for the resumption of struggle; it makes it the duty and right of mankind to strive for that bright and feasible ideal, and to continue striving. It causes mankind to gain in self-confidence and to trust in its own inner nature and hidden potentialities, which enable it — if the correct path is followed — to reach that level of higher humanity which it once attained in the course of its history. It did not attain it by an extraordinary and unrepeatable miracle. It



attained it by means of a path corresponding to its own nature, one realized by human efforts and within the bounds of human capacities.

That great and exceptional generation arose in the heart of the poverty-stricken desert, poor in natural, economic and scientific resources. Although this environment was suitable to the rise of such a generation, humanity, today and tomorrow, is not incapable, either by virtue of its inner nature or by virtue of its potentialities, of succeeding once again in its exertions, providing it takes the divinely ordained path as its guide.

This path — despite the deviations, hostility and attacks it has suffered in the course of time — continued to produce ideal men, similar to those of the first brilliant generation, influenced and moulded by its example. It continued to influence strongly the life of humanity through those ideal men, and to affect the course of human history. It left deep traces and impresses on the nature of life and the world.

This path at all times is still capable of producing such ideal men, so long as serious efforts are made for applying and fortifying it in life, irrespective of all opposing factors and all obstacles in its path.

The secret hidden within it is its direct cooperation with the essential nature of man, and its exploitation of his potential resources. These resources are considerable and permanent. When they come into contact with this path, streams of wealth gush forth, and the hidden superabundance stands revealed.

This ideal period of excellence was able to establish for human life principles, ideas, values and criteria

which has no precedent in the whole history of humanity, all of them clear, profound, comprehensive and vital. None of them were established at any other time in human history, by any other path or system on earth, with such clarity, profundity, comprehensiveness and vitality. Nor — which is the most important — with such truthfulness, seriousness, sincerity and profound devotion to truth.

These principles, ideas, values and criteria embraced every sector of human life. they embraced the human concept of God, and the relation of humanity to Him; the human concept of existence, of the purpose of existence, its general place and function in the universe.

Consequently, they dealt too with the concept of the real nature of the human being, his rights, duties and obligations; the criteria for judging his life, activity and rank, on which are based too his relations with the Sustainer and with his fellow-beings, his relations with the totality of creation, with living beings and with objects.

They dealt too with political, social and economic rights and duties, systems, the situations and relationships that connect together these rights and duties. In short, all fields of human life with their different features and aspects were covered.

On all of these, this ideal period impressed its own distinctive nature, its unique divine stamp.

All this took place in a local environment hostile to these principles and ideas, these values and criteria, in a worldly atmosphere denying their very basis, in economic, political and social circumstances bound

by their very nature to clash with the attitudes inculcated by Islam and established for the first time in the actuality of human life. At the very least they did not favour the swift movement of Islamic ideals. It relied for its success above all on the capacities of human nature for responding to the divinely ordained path — which profoundly corresponds to human nature — rather than being overwhelmed by superficial impressions. It activated this potential and brought it out from behind the clouds that were obscuring it. It is indeed a vast potential, capable — if the correct path for freeing it from confusion and sloth exists — of resisting superficial impressions, which are in the eyes of some short-sighted people the be-all and end-all of human life. Islam does not ignore these impressions, nor does it neglect their effects on human life. But neither does it surrender to them, regarding them as an inescapable reality. Instead it has recourse to the potentialities of human nature, attempts to concentrate and direct them in order to modify reality, gently and painlessly, in the manner of operation described in the previous chapter. The result will then be what was attained in the ideal period: negative local and worldwide circumstances were combated and transformed into positive favorable circumstances. This took place both in the Arabian Peninsula and beyond.

Humanity today is, in some respects, in a better position than it was when this divinely ordained path was first brought. In a short period it has brought about a great revolution in prosperity and comfort, is better able to work according to the path, for reasons to be set forth in a future chapter. Its capacity to

endure is greater, especially since we know that the potential of human nature, despite the clouds of corruption, evil and perversion that hang over it, and despite the material conditions and economic and intellectual factors that threaten to crush it, is able to arise, collect itself and work. This ability is realized when the divinely ordained path realises, concentrates and directs it, sends it on the course which is in accord with the essential nature of man and the essential nature of creation as willed by God. This potential, in view of its purity, profundity and vastness, is superior to all other factors which takes on the aspect of "reality". What matter, then, if today these factors stand opposed to it?

In the eyes of some who do not know the true nature of this path, "reality" appears to be something unchangeable, irreversible and almighty!

This is a great illusion. The essential nature of the human being is also a "reality". It is not in accord with outward reality, since every where it is suffering from it. Whenever the essential nature of humanity clashes with a certain circumstance or system, it is at first defeated, because behind the circumstance or system there is a material force which imposes itself. There is however no doubt that human nature is stronger and more lasting than any incidental circumstance, and that it will inevitably triumph in the end, particularly when it is directed in a path the nature of which corresponds to its own nature.

This has already happened once, on that day when the divinely ordained path confronted the "reality" of the Arabian peninsula, and the "reality" of the

entire world. It triumphed brilliantly over that reality, transformed its intellectual and practical bases and erected it on new foundations.

This did not take place through some unique, unrepeatable miracle. It was achieved — in accordance with God's everlasting custom — through human exertion, and within the bounds of human capacities. This precedent indicates the possibility of its own repetition.

The legacy of that brilliant period, the traces it has left in the life of mankind and the reality of history, are all favourable factors for a new struggle.

That period was able to establish in the life of mankind practical traditions and realistic institutions, based on its own principles, ideas, values and criteria, that did not die and disappear with the end of an era. They extended like a moving stream impelled to the far corners of the earth, and consecutive eras and epochs. The life of all humanity was affected by them, in one way or another, and they became a resource for mankind, to which it has recourse for more than a thousand years. They affected ideas, circumstances, traditions, science and economy, all the spheres of civilization. Their traces still continue to affect the life of humanity down to the present, despite all the forces which resist this floodtide, and despite the relapse of the western world, which has dominated the entire earth for some time, into Greco-Roman ignorance of divine guidance.

There have been established in the life of mankind, beyond their specific effects, principles and values, theories and institutions, whose real origin is unknown to present-day humanity, and whose source

is ascribed to something other than that divinely ordained and effective path. It is not however impossible to recognize its first origin and thereby to return to following the divine path and realizing its effects in human life. In a following chapter we will indicate some of the long strides taken by humanity towards establishing that path today, which when Islam first appeared it strongly rejected, thirteen hundred odd years ago!

It is possibly because of these steps taken in the life of humanity and because of its present situation that humanity is in general nearer today to understanding the path of Islam, for it is in possession of the legacy of the first wave, something it did not enjoy when Islam first came. It similarly enjoys a stock of experiences derived from periods of deviation from the path of Islam, and the cares that today afflict it as a result. These are some of the factors favourable to an acceptance of the divine path, and enable patience in the coming struggle, God willing.

## *CHAPTER V*

# **THE POTENTIAL OF HUMAN NATURE**

When Islam was first revealed, it confronted a huge "reality", namely the Arabian Peninsula and beyond it the entire world. Beliefs, ideas, values, criteria, systems, circumstances, interests and loyalties — all these resisted it.

The distance between Islam, when it was first revealed, and the actual states of people in the Arabian Peninsula and the world, was huge and overwhelming. Those actual states were reinforced by centuries of history, by various interests, different forces, all of which formed a barrier in the path of this new faith. The new faith was not content with changing beliefs, ideas, values, criteria, customs, traditions, ethics and feelings; it insistently wanted to change also systems, institutions, laws and the distribution of wealth and livelihood. It insisted too on removing the control of humanity from the hands of oppression and ignorance, and restoring it to God and to Islam.

If it had been said to someone living at the time, that the new faith attempting all that, in the face of so overwhelming a reality and all the forces on earth, would triumph and transform that reality in the course of half a century, the only response would have been scorn and disbelief.

But this huge overwhelming reality was soon obliged to retreat from its position and to yield to the

newcomer. Soon the new leader assumed the leadership of humanity in order to bring it out from darkness into light, through the Law of God and under the banner of Islam.

How could this be? It seemed impossible for the one dazzled by "reality" and crushed by its weight as he weighed affairs and circumstances. How could a single man, Muhammad the son of Abdullah, s.a.w. stand alone against the whole world, or at least against the Arab Peninsula at the beginning? Or at least against the Quraysh, the lords of the Arabs at the beginning of his mission? Against all those beliefs, ideas, values, criteria, systems, institutions, interests and loyalties, and then triumph over them all? And change them all, erect a new system, on the basis of the new path and the new idea?

He did not flatter their ideas and beliefs, truckle to their feelings and sentiments, or compromise with their leadership. he did not humble himself in order to secure his position. he was ordered at the very beginning, when he was in Makkah and all the forces were ranged against him: "Say: O unbelievers! I worship not that which you worship. Nor do you worship which I worship. Nor do I worship that which you have worshipped. Nor do you worship that which I worship. To you, your religion, and to me, mine".

He did not consent himself with proclaiming the separation between his religion and theirs, and his form or worship and theirs, and the unbridgeable gap between them. Rather he was ordered to prevent them from hoping for the realization of any compromise in the future. He repeated to them: "Nor do I worship that which you have worshipped. Nor do you



worship that which I worship." He was commanded to emphasize the unbridgeable gap between them : "To you, your religion, and to me, mine".

He did not dazzle them with any claim to mysterious power, to superhuman privileges of unseen origin. He was commanded to say: "Say: I do not tell you that I have the treasures of God, or knowledge of the unseen, nor do I say to you that I am an angel. I follow only that which is revealed to me".  
(al-An'am, v. 50)

He did not distribute promises of high office and wealth to those who followed him, when he triumphed over his opponents. Ibn Is'haq said: "The Prophet s.a.w. showed himself to the tribes at the season of the pilgrimage saying: O such-and-such a tribe! I am the messenger of God to you, commanding you to worship Him and not to ascribe Him any partners; to abandon whatever idols you worship in His place; to believe in me and to help me so that I may proclaim the message God has entrusted to me".

Ibn Is'haq also records as follows : "I was informed by al-Zahri that the Prophet went to the tribe of Banu Amir bin Sa'sa'a, summoning them to the worship of God Almighty. He appeared before them and a man from among them, by name Bayhara bin Firas, said: "By God, were I to take this man from Quraysh, with his help I would devour all the Arabs". He then asked of the Prophet: "If we vow allegiance to you and then God gives you victory over your enemies, will we enjoy power after you?" The Prophet replied: "Power belongs to God; He places it where He pleases". he answered: "You wish us to fight against the Arabs, and then if God supports you, power will

not be ours? We have no need of your cause". And they rejected him.

How then did it all come about? How was that single individual able to overcome all that "reality"?

He did not overcome it by some extraordinary, unrepeatable miracle. He proclaimed s.a.w. that he would not perform any such miracles, and he never — not even once, — considered it necessary to attract attention by such means. That which took place did so in accordance with a constant and repeatable method that holds true whenever people invoke it.

The triumph of the divinely ordained way of life took place because of its cooperation — beyond apparent reality — with the hidden potentialities of human nature. This potential, as we have already pointed out, is vast and huge; superficial clouds cannot overcome it when it is liberated, concentrated, directed and released in a certain direction.

Perverted and corrupt beliefs were enthralling mankind. False gods were crowding the courtyard of the Ka'ba and the minds, imaginations and hearts of men. Tribal and economic interests were based on these false gods, and behind them stood the guardians of the Ka'ba and the soothsayers. This situation derived from the distribution of the attributes of divinity among men, and from giving to the guardians of the Ka'ba and the soothsayers the right to legislate for the people and to lay down a path for their life.

Islam came to oppose this "reality" with the One True God. It addressed itself to true human nature which knows only the One True God, and informed the people of their true Lord, His attributes and

properties, which were already known to human nature beneath the debris of false beliefs.

"Say: shall I take to myself as protector other than God, the Originator of the heavens and of the earth, He who feeds and is not fed? Say: I have been commanded to be the first of them that surrender unto God: "Be not thou of the idolaters". Say: "indeed I fear if I should rebel against my Lord, the chastisement of a dreadful day". From whomsoever it is averted on that day, He will have mercy on him; that is the manifest triumph. And if God visits you with affliction, none can remove it but He; and if He visits you with good, He is powerful over everything. He is omnipotent over His servants, and He is the All-wise, the All-aware. Say: "what thing is greatest in testimony?". Say: "God is witness between me and you, and this Qur'an had been revealed to me, that I may warn you thereby, and whomsoever it may reach. Do you indeed testify that there are other gods with God?" Say: "I do not testify": Say: "He is only one God, and I am free of what you associate unto Him".

(al-An'am, vv. 14-19)

Say: "I am forbidden to serve those you call on apart from God". Say: "I do not follow your caprices, or else I had gone astray and would not be of the right-guided". Say: "I stand upon a clear sign from my Lord, and you would have cried lies to it. Not with me is that which you seek to hasten; the judgments is God's alone. He relates the truth, and He is the best of deciders". Say: "If what you seek to hasten were with me, the matter between you and me would be decided; and God knows very well the evildoers".

With him are the keys of the unseen; none knows them but He. He knows what is in land and sea; not

a leaf falls, but He knows it. Not a grain in the earth's shadows, not a thing, fresh or withered, but it is in a Book Manifest. It is He who recalls you by night, and He knows what you mark by day; then He raises you up therein, that a stated term may be determined; then unto Him shall you return, then He will tell you of what you have been doing. He is the Omnipotent over His servants. he sends recorders over you till, when anyone of you is visited by death, Our messenger take him and they neglect not. Then they are restored to God their Protector, the True. Surely His is the judgment; He is the swiftest of reckoners.

Say: "Who delivers you from the shadows of land and sea? You call upon Him humbly and secretly, Truly, if thou deliverest from these, we shall be among the thankful". Say: "God delivers you from them and from every distress; then you assign Him associates". Say: "He is able to send forth upon you chastisement, from above you or from under your feet, or to confuse you in sects and to make you taste the violence of one another". Behold how we turn about the signs that may be they will understand". (al-An'am, vv. 56-65)

Essential human nature listened to this non-create voice that addressed it through the clouds of a heavy "reality", in the wide waste of error. It returned to its One True God, and the new summons triumphed over the weighty "reality"!

When men returned to the One God, it became impossible for people to worship people. All stood erect in dignity before each other, on the day when all heads were bowed in front of the One Omnipotent God. The legend of superior stock and race, of inherited nobility, rule, and kingship — all this same to an end.

How did this come to be?

There was a social reality, backed by class, racial, material and intellectual interests, dominant in the Arabian Peninsula and in the surrounding world. None objected to this reality, for those who profited by it did not tire of it, and those crushed by it were not able to condemn it.

The Quraysh called themselves "the noble" and attributed to themselves right and traditions not granted to the other Arabs. During the pilgrimage, they would stay at Muzdalifa while all others would be at 'Arafat. On the basis of these privileges, they enjoyed economic advantages over the rest of the Arabs. Thus they forbade circumambulation of the Ka'ba in clothes other than those bought from the Quraysh. Otherwise it was to be performed in a state of nudity.

The world surrounding the Arabian peninsula was groaning under the weight of discrimination based on blood and race.

"Iranian society was based on discrimination of stock and profession. An unbridgeable gap existed between the classes of society. The state forbade the general population from buying the property of a prince or a notable. One of the bases of the Sasanian polity was that each individual should content himself with the position bestowed upon him by his descent, and should not strive for something beyond it. None might engage in a trade other than that God had created him for. The kings of Iran did not delegate a single one of their duties to a commoner. The common people were similarly divided into distinct classes, each of which had a well-defined position in society".\*

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\* Quotation from Arthur Christensen's work on Iran in the Sasanid period.

"The kings of Iran used to claim that divine blood ran in their veins. The Persians used to regard them as gods, and to believe that there was something sublime and divine in their natures. They begged them for forgiveness of their sins, sang hymns in praise of their divinity, and regarded them as above law, above criticism and above humanity. They might not mention their names or sit in their assemblies. They believed that they had a claim to all men, but had themselves no obligations to others. Any paltry gift bestowed out of their superfluous wealth was an undeserved act of charity towards a people whose only duty was subordination and obedience. All this is true in particular of a certain house, that of the Kayanis, who alone were regarded as fit to bear the crown and to exact tribute. These rights were transferred from father to son, and only the unjust would dispute them. They believed in the institution of monarchy and its hereditary transference within the royal house, desiring no substitute for this system. If an adult could not be found among them to rule, then a child would come to the throne. If a man was not to be found, then a woman would rule over them. After Shirvayh, his son Ardeshir came to the throne at the age of seven. Similarly, Farrokhzad Khosrou son of Khosrou Parviz came to the throne while still a child. A second daughter of Khosrou, the name Azarmaidukht, was appointed to rule, and it did not occur to anyone to choose some great general or leader such as Rustam or Jaban, simply because they were not related to the royal household."\*

The caste system in India represented the vilest and harshest of man's deed to man.

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\*Quotation from Abul Hasan al-Nadawi's "What the World has lost by the Decline of the Muslims."

"Three centuries before Christ, the Brahmin civilization flourished in India which gave a new impress to Indian society. A new civil and political law was religious authority. This was known as the Manushastra.

"This law divided the people into four distinct classes. Firstly, the Brahmins, the caste of the soothsayers and the men of religion. Secondly, the Kshatris, the men of war. Thirdly, the Vaishyas, the cultivators and merchants. Fourthly, the Shudras, the servants.

"Manu, the author of this law, says:

"The Absolute and Almighty One, in the interest of the world, created the Brahmins from his mouth, the Kshatris from His arms, the Vaishyas from His thighs, and the Shudras from His legs. He distributed among them various obligations and duties for the sake of the world. The Brahmins are to teach the Vedas and offer up sacrifices to the gods and to distribute alms. The Kshatris are to guard the people, to offer up sacrifices, to study the Vedas and to shun the passions. The Vaishyas are to pasture cattle, to read the Veda and to engage in trade and agriculture. The Shudras are only to serve the other three classes."

"This law granted to the Brahmin caste rights and privileges that bestowed on them almost the status of gods. It said that they were the chosen of God and the lords of creations; all that existed in the world was their property; they were the most noble of creatures and the masters of the world. They might take away from their Shudra slaves — without any crime — whatever they wanted. For the slave possesses nothing, and all his property belongs to his master.

The Brahmin who memorizes the Rigveda has all his sins forgiven, even if his sins and foul deeds were to annihilate the universe. The king is not permitted, even in the direst hours of need, to impose any levy on the Brahmins or tribute. No Brahmin may be permitted to die of hunger, even though he may be deserving of death."

"The Kshatris, even though superior to the Vaishyas and the Shudras, are far inferior to the Brahmins. Manu says: "The ten-year old Brahmin is superior to the centenarian kshatri, in the same way as the father is superior to his son".

"As for the 'untouchable' Shudras, they were in Indian Society, on the basis of this religious and civil code, lower than beasts and more despised than dogs. The law declares: "It is the happiness of the Shudra to serve the Brahmin, and for this they need no remuneration or reward. They may not acquire wealth or store up treasure, for this pains the Brahmin. If a Shudra stretches out his hand or a stick to attack a Brahmin, then his hand shall be cut off. If he kicks him in anger, his foot shall be severed; if an untouchable attempts to sit in the company of a Brahmin, the king shall brand his posterior, or banish him from the realm. If he reviles a Brahmin, his tongue shall be plucked out. If he lays claim to acquaintance with a Brahmin, he shall be made to drink boiling oil. The compensation to be paid for the murder of an untouchable is the same as that to be paid for a dog, a cat, a frog, a lizard, a crow or an owl". \*

As for the celebrated Roman civilization, it was based on luxury that the slaves — three quarters of the

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\* Quoted from the same work of Abul Hasan Nadawi.



population — provided for the nobility — the remaining quarter. In law too there was discrimination between slaves and masters, between noble and plebeian classes.

In the famous code of Justinian we read as follows :

"Whosoever ravishes a respectable widow or a virgin, his punishment, if he be from a noble household, is the forfeiture of half of his wealth. if he be from a lowly family, he shall be scourged and driven out of the land".

While this was the state of affairs throughout the world, Islam addressed itself directly to the true and essential disposition of man, which unwittingly rejected and disapproved of this position. Its response to the call of Islam entirely overcame the prevailing situation.

The nature of man heard God Almighty addressing the totality of mankind: "O people, we have created you of male and female, and made of you people and tribes that you might recognize one another. Truly the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you".

(al-Hujrat, v.13)

It heard Him too addressing Quraysh in particular: "Then run forth (in the pilgrimage) where the others run forth".

(al-Baqara, v. 199)

It heard the Prophet of God s.a.w. addressing all men: "O people! Your Lord is one. Your ancestor is one. You all belong to Adam, and Adam was of clay. The most noble of you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you. There is no superiority of

Arab over non-Arab, of non-Arab over Arab, of the darkskinned over the fair-skinned, of the fair-skinned over the dark-skinned, unless it be by piety and fear of God".

It heard him addressing the Quraysh in particular saying:

"O assembly of Quraysh! Buy your souls, for nothing will avail you against God. O sons of Abd Manaf, nothing will avail you against God. O Abbas ibn Abdul Mutallib, nothing will avail you against God. O Fatima daughter of Muhammad, demand from me what you will of my wealth, for nothing will avail you against God".

Human nature heard and responded, and the consequences followed in accordance with God's eternal custom that may recur at any time.

The system of usury prevailed in the Arabian Peninsula, and the entire economy was based on it. Let no one imagine that it was a question simply of isolated transactions between individuals. The Quraysh undertook a considerable trade with Syria in the summer and the Yemen in the winter. The capital of The Quraysh was invested in this trade. Let us not forget that the caravan of Abu Sufyan that the Muslims ambushed at the battle of Badr and then evaded them to be replaced by God with something better for them, contained a thousand camels loaded with goods. If usury had simply been practised in restricted individual dealings, and not been a comprehensive system of economic life, it would not have deserved the repeated and scorching attack made on it by God Almighty in the Qur'an, and the pursuance of that attack by the Prophet s.a.w. in the *Hadith*.

This capital, this commercial activity, this economy — all were based on the system of usury. Shortly before the mission of the Prophet, the economies of various countries came to be gathered into this system, as for example in Madina, where the economy was dominated by the Jews. Usury is in fact the basis of the economic system of the Jews.

This was the economic "reality" on which the life of the land was based.

Then Islam came, denying and rejecting this unjust and criminal system, and setting forth in its stead a new basis: that of *zakat*, of the goodwill loan, of cooperation and mutual solidarity.

"Those who expend their wealth night and day, secretly and in public, their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. Those who devour usury shall not rise again except as he rises, whom Satan of the touch prostrates; that is because they say 'Trafficking is like usury'. God has permitted trafficking and has forbidden usury. Whosoever receives an admonition from his Lord and gives over, he shall have his past gains, and his affair is committed to God; but whosoever reverts — those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein dwelling forever. God blots out usury, but freewill offerings He augments with interest. God loves not any guilty ingrate. Those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms — their wage awaits them with their Lord, and no fear shall be on them, neither shall they sorrow. O believers, fear you God; and give up the usury that is outstanding, if you are believers. But if you do not, then take notice that God shall war with you, and His

messenger; yet if you repent, you shall have your principal, unwronging and unwronged. And if any man should be in difficulties, let him have respite till things are easier; but that you should give freewill offerings is better for you, did you but know. And fear a day wherein you shall be returned to God, and every soul shall be paid in full what it has earned; and they shall not be wronged". (al-Baqara, vv. 274-281)

Human nature found that the summons of God was better than the situation in which it found itself. It grew disgusted with the vile system on which usury subsisted. Despite the hardships involved in changing the economic situation on which the life of people was based, the response of human nature again proved stronger than the weight of "reality". Muslim society was purged of that pollution from the days of ignorance. This too took place in accordance with the custom of God which repeats itself whenever human nature is summoned out from behind the debris of false belief.

In this chapter we will content ourselves with these three examples of the triumph of true human nature over "reality", of its emergence from the debris of false beliefs, its victory over the external "reality" which had been erected by human ignorance of divine guidance. This reality consisted of beliefs and ideas, circumstances and traditions, economic factors. All these appear to the one who is unaware of the power of faith and of true human nature to be an overwhelming and irresistible fact.

Islam did not fold its hands in surrender to this "reality". It abolished it, or changed it, and erected in

its place its own sublime and unique structure, on its firm and profound basis.

What happened once can happen again. What happened was in accord with a continuing custom, not an extraordinary miracle. That structure arose out of the potential of human nature; a potential available to all who wish to exploit it, to concentrate it, direct it and release in the correct direction.

Humanity today may well be better able to follow that direction, because of the traces left on its history by that first wave of Islam, which confronted the harshest opposition, but continuing on its path left behind it the most profound of imprints.

## *CHAPTER VI*

### **THE RESOURCES OF EXPERIENCE**

When Islam confronted humanity for the first time, it had at its disposal in meeting the challenge of the prevailing situation only the potential of human nature. Human nature stood on the side of Islam, despite the long centuries that had passed by during which the debris of the age of ignorance of divine guidance had piled up on it. Human nature was able to free itself, and its response to Islam was enough to clear away the debris.

That was a remarkable period, a sublime summit, an exceptional generation of men, a bright beacon. It was, as we have said, decreed and willed by God, so that this unique image might be materialized in the situations of real life and recourse might later be had to it, in order to repeat it within the limitations of human capacity.

It was not the natural outcome of its environment, but rather the fruit of the actualized potential of human nature, when it found the path, the leadership, guidance and the movement to bring into action and impel it forwards.

However, humanity as a whole was not yet prepared to remain for long at that lofty summit which that select group of men had ascended. When Islam spread throughout the earth with such amazing speed, unparalleled in the course of history, and the people in their masses entered the religion of God; when the

mass of the Islamic community did not receive the deep, unique and gradual training that select group had received; then the pressure of remnants from the age of ignorance surviving in the masses who had pledged allegiance to Islam, began to drag down the entire body of the community from the lofty height to level ground. Only a great leap could lift the community up to those heights, such as that of the select group who had received a unique, profound and gradual training, a training which had mobilized the resources of human nature and released them in the correct direction.

So the Muslim community remained for more than a thousand years not at a lofty peak, but at different levels, all of them higher than those of other societies throughout the world. Indeed, other societies sought help from it, as history bears witness, if it is honest. But how rare is honest history!

That unique leap forward in the history of mankind, and the high levels maintained for a thousand years thereafter, were not in vain, nor were they lost to the world of humanity, for they left behind a different world from that which they had first encountered.

Such is not the custom of God with regard to life and to man. Mankind is a cohesive unit over a long span of time, and the body of humanity is a vital organism which makes use of its store of experiences and accumulates resources of knowledge. These resources, however much they were covered up by clouds of ignorance and however much dominated by blindness and darkness, remained immanent and permanent, and even circulating through the body of mankind.

If the call of Islam at first found only the potential of human nature with which it might oppose and confront the actual situation of man (excluding the slight potential represented by the previous messages which had been sent to certain nations, rather than to the whole of humanity, like Islam), today it has at its disposal not only this potential but also the resources brought into being by the first wave of Islam — those who believed in Islam, lived under its rule and were influenced by it. Similarly it disposes of the bitter experiences of mankind collected in the wasteland of isolation from God.

Principles, ideas, values, criteria, systems and institutions confronted by Islam at the very beginning when it had at its disposal only the resources of human nature, it condemned and resisted utterly. Then the principles, ideas, values, criteria, systems and institutions of Islam established themselves in the life of a group of men for a period of time. Thereafter they were established in the broad Islamic world, at different levels, for a further period. Finally they became known to almost the entirety of humanity, for approximately thirteen hundred years. They were known of as a dream, as a hope, if not in practice, devotion and experience.

Hence they did not appear strange to mankind as they had on the day when Islam was first proclaimed. They did not appear reprehensible to its feelings and customs as they had then. It is true that mankind did not experience them as did that select group of the first generation of Muslims in that unique period. It is also true that when it attempted to apply some of them at different times, including the modern era, it



failed to perceive their spirit and to apply them in accordance therewith. It is true that it is still stumbling as it seeks to mount towards the peak the early Muslims attained at one leap.

Despite all this, humanity as a whole, from the intellectual viewpoint, is closer to perceiving the true nature of this divinely ordained path, and to being able to follow it, than it was when Islam was first revealed.

Specific examples will clarify this point. We will select only a few, without treating them in detail. This for two reasons: firstly, the present discussion is only a brief indication of the elements contained within the great topic of the Islamic faith. Secondly, the broad lines which have been traced by the first wave of Islam in the life of the whole of humanity and of all regions of the earth, are too numerous, significant and extensive to be dealt with by a single writer in a single work. These traces have sunk into the life of humanity since that distant period, and have embraced the being of all humanity on a broad scale in a manner not entirely visible to the observer.

It is possible to say — by way of summary — that this universal phenomenon which manifested itself on the planet earth, namely the religion of Islam, did not leave unvisited a single aspect of human life, and although its influence may differ in degree of intensity, the reality of its effect is not to be doubted. Every single one of the great movements of history derived, directly or indirectly, from that momentous happening; or, to be more precise, from that vast universal phenomenon.

The movement of religious reform, undertaken by Luther and Calvin in Europe; the renaissance from

which Europe is still nourished today; the destruction of the feudal system and liberation from aristocratic rule; the movement of equality and the rights of man which appeared in the Magna Carta in England and the French Revolution; the experimental method on which is based the scientific glory of Europe — all these, which are commonly accepted as chief developments of history, were derived from that great Islamic wave and fundamentally and profoundly influenced by it.

Dr. Ahmad Amin writes in his book "The Dawn of Islam".

"Movements arose among the Christians bearing the trace of Islamic influence, among them being in the eighth century A.D. (second/third centuries A.H.) the movement that arose in Septimania. This movement rejected the confession of sins before priests, claiming that man should plead only to God for remission of his wrongdoing. Islam has neither priests nor monks nor rabbis, and naturally it does not recognize confession.

"Similarly there arose a movement for the destruction of religious pictures and statues (the Iconoclasts). In the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. (third and fourth centuries A.H.) a Christian sect came into being rejecting the sanctification of pictures and statues. The Roman Emperor Leo III issued an order in 726 A.D. prohibiting pictures and statues and pictures to be worshipped, and another in 730 A.D. condemning such worship as idolatry. Similarly Constantine V and Leo IV opposed statue worship, while Popes Gregory II and III and Germanius, the patriarch of Constantinople, and the Empress Irene supported it. A bitter struggle took place between the

two factions, the details of which we cannot recount here. We wish only to point out that some historians regard the call for destruction of images and statues to have been influenced by Islam. It is said that Claudius, the bishop of Turenne (appointed in 828 A.D./213 A.H.) who burnt images and crosses and forbade their worship in his diocese, was born and brought up in Islamic Andalusia.

"There was also a group of Christians who interrupted the concept of the trinity in a more or less monotheistic manner and denied the divinity of Christ".

When the barbaric armies of the Crusaders returned from Islamic East in the eleventh century A.D., they brought with them an image of the life of Muslim society. Despite all the deviations that had taken place in that society, the outstanding characteristic that pervaded it — in contrast to the barbaric Crusader lands — was the unity of the law to which both ruler and ruled submitted, and which did not derive from the will of an aristocrat or the whims of feudal lords, as was the case in Europe. There was, too, personal liberty in the choice of work and place of residence; private ownership and free disposition of goods; absence of an hereditary class structure; and the ability of the individual to rise, by his own labor and efforts, to a higher place in society at any time. A European living under the feudal system had never before witnessed these outstanding features, being as he was a slave to the soil, his only law the will of his master, and his class being determined by heredity.

Thus it was — in conjunction with other economic factors in the life of European society — that cries

arose which gradually destroyed the feudal system; proclaimed the liberation of the individual from slavery to the soil, even if not from other bonds, and even if European society was not lifted to the level of Muslim society.

From the universities of Andalusia; from the influence of eastern Islamic Civilization which had become an international civilization; from the European translations of the Islamic legacy, there came into being the European renaissance movement in the fourteenth century and the subsequent periods. There came into being also the new scientific movement, in particular the experimental method.

Brifeld, in his book "The Making of Humanity" says:

"Science was the most important contribution of Arab civilization\* to the modern world, but its fruits were slow in ripening. The genius produced by Arab civilization in Spain did not begin to bloom until many centuries after that civilization had disappeared behind dark clouds, and it was not science alone that revived Europe. Many other effects of Islamic civilization shed their rays of light on Europe. Although there is not a particular aspect of the European blossoming whose origin cannot safely be ascribed to the influence of Islamic culture, these influences are found most clearly and most significantly in that capacity which has furnished the modern world with its endur-

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\*It should be noted that western writers are anxious to call Islamic civilization by the name of Arab civilization. This is done purposely, for the name of Islam is distasteful to them, and they wish too to restrict Islam to the Arabs. the scope of Islam is however far wider. They wish to stir up racial hatred within the Islamic community.

ing and distinctive power: namely, the natural sciences and the spirit of scientific enquiry".

He goes on to say:

"Our science owes to that of the Arabs not amazing discoveries or original theories, but something much more important — its own existence. The ancient world, as we have seen, was one where science was non-existent. Astronomy and mathematics were foreign sciences for the Greeks, imported from abroad and borrowed from outsiders, and never acclimatized, although mixed into Greek culture. The Greeks codified its laws and laid down theories. But the methods of conscientious investigation, the collection and concentration of positive data, the analytical approach to science, precise and continuous observation, experimental investigation — all these were basically foreign to the Greek mentality. That which we call "science" appeared in Europe as the outcome of a new spirit of investigation, fresh avenues of research by means of experimentation and observation, and as the result of a development of mathematics to a stage unknown to the Greeks .... This spirit and these methods of research were imported by the Arabs into the European world".\*

He says before this:

"Roger Bacon studied Arabic and Arab science at Oxford under the successors to the Arab scientists of Andalusia. Neither Roger Bacon, nor his namesake Francis Bacon who came after him, has the right to be credited with the invention of the experimental method. Roger Bacon was but one of the messengers of the

science and methodology of the Muslims to Christian Europe. He never tired of declaring that for his contemporaries to learn the Arabic language and the Arab science was the only way for acquiring true knowledge. The discussion as to the inventor of the experimental method is one example of the distortion of the origins of European civilization. The method of the Arabs had spread widely during the time of Bacon, and everywhere in Europe people were eager to learn it.

Whence did Roger Bacon derive his knowledge of the science?

"From the Islamic universities of Andalusia. The fifth section of his book *"Cepus Majus"*, which is devoted to a discussion of optics, is in reality a copy of ibn Haytham's *"al-Manazir"*.

Dreyber, professor at New York University, says in his book *"The Struggle between Religion and Science"*:

"Muslim scientists became aware that intellectual, theoretical methods do not lead to progress, and that the hope of finding the truth must be connected with an observation of events. Hence their slogan in their researches came to be the experimental method and the practical result of sense-perception.

"The results of this scientific movement appear clearly in the brilliant progress of industry in their era. We will be amazed to see in their writings scientific theories which we thought to be the product of our own age. Among these is the doctrine of evolution of organic beings — which is regarded as a modern doctrine — and was taught in the Muslims' schools. They had taken this doctrine further than we have

done and applied it to solids and minerals. (Caution must be exercised with respect to this statement and similar ones, made by western writers who make a show of justice towards Islam and Islamic thought. The doctrine of evolution as established by Darwin and Wallace is different from what was established by the Scientific investigations of the Muslims, who were not fleeing from the church and the god of the church. Muslim scientists observed the gradation between the stages of creation. They began with the attributes lowest degree of vegetable life. The degrees of vegetable life culminated in turn in the lowest degree of animal life, and hence life evolved. All this they attributed to the will and activity of God. Darwin however wished to deny and intervention of any supernatural element in evolution. This was because he was in flight from the church and the god of the church in whose name science and scientific investigation in general were persecuted. By contrast, the investigations of the Muslims were not tainted with any disrespect for man, depriving him of any spiritual element and discovering for him some bestial origin. The Islamic theory states clearly that man was created independently. If man sits at the summit of the degrees of living beings, in regard of the formation of his members and his intellectual and spiritual capacities, this is because God Almighty created Him as He created all beings at the level where they exist. There is, then, a great difference in the basis of the theory, although the Muslims were the first to propound it.) They applied chemistry in medicine, and progressed so far in mechanics as to be able to define the laws of gravity. In the theories of light and vision they were able to change the opinion of the Greeks that vision

takes place by the emission of rays from the eye to the object beheld; they established that the opposite was true. They knew of the reflection and refraction of rays. Hasan ibn al-Haytham discovered the arc followed by rays of light on their passage through the atmosphere, and proved at the same time that we see the sun and moon before they actually appear on the horizon, and that we can still see them for a short time after they set".

We must content ourselves with these examples of the influence of the Islamic path and the Islamic life on the life of mankind and its history, and on the major movements in the world history. They are meant purely as an indication of that great, many-sided truth which we so frequently forget. When we behold the structure of contemporary civilization, we imagine, in our simplicity and ignorance, that we have no part in it, that we have had no influence upon it; that it is something greater than us and our history. Even our own history is unknown to us; we hear it form the mouths of our enemies whose only desire is to fill our hearts with despair at the possibility of an Islamic life; one in conformity with the path of Islam. They derive advantage from our despair, for it protects them from attack by us, attack in order to wrest back the reins of world leadership. What ails us that we absorb what they say, and then repeat it like parrots or monkeys?

This is not our subject here. We intent only to prepare for an indication of the broad lines traced by the first Islamic wave and well-known to humanity. Humanity too is today better able to comprehend and imagine these, which constitute the new resource, in addition to that already existing — human nature.



## *CHAPTER VII*

### **TRACES AND EFFECTS**

When the first hightide of Islam passed away; when ignorance of divine guidance resumed its sway after being deposed by Islam; when Satan shook the dust of battle from his shoulders, arose and summoned his followers who again held the reins of power — when all of this happened the life of mankind did not return to the state it had been in during the previous period of ignorance. Islam was there, even if it had retreated from its position of dominance in the world. It had left behind it broad traces, significant principles that had become established in human life and familiar to people. They had lost the strangeness with which they had first been received when proclaimed by Islam. These broad traces and significant principles we wish to indicate briefly in this chapter.

#### **ONE HUMANITY**

The Arabian Peninsula was dominated by loyalty to the tribe, the subtribe or even to the single family, and the outside world by loyalty to country, birthplace, color and race. Humanity was unable to imagine any other kind of loyalty until Islam came and proclaimed to everyone that humanity is one, stems from the same source and is directed towards the same God; that difference of race and color, of fatherland and ancestry exist not to create division, enmity and alienation among humanity, but merely so that men might recognize and identify each other; so

that the tasks of the viceregency of God on earth might be distributed among them; and so that they might ultimately all return to God who had placed them on earth as His viceregents. God Almighty addressed them thus in the Noble Qur'an:

"O people, we have created you to male and female, and made of you peoples and tribes that you might recognize each other. The most noble of you in the sight of God is the most God-fearing among you. Truly God is All-seeing, All-wise".

(al-Hujarat v.13)

"O people, fear your Lord who created you from a single soul, and created from it its mate, and scattered from these two numerous men and women. Fear God by whom you demand of one another, and the wombs. Surely God ever watches over you".

(al-Nisa, v.1)

"Among His signs are the creation of heaven and earth and the variation of your tongues and your colors. Truly therein are signs for all the worlds".

(al-Rum, v.22)

These were not theoretical principles, but practical situations. Islam expanded over a wide area of the globe which embraced most races and colors, and melted them all together in the order of Islam. Inherited color, race, class or lineage did not prevent all from living together as brothers, or the individual from attaining what his qualifications enabled him to, and his rank as human being imposed upon him.

This broad trace established itself in the world, although initially strange to the world and rejected by it. Even after the recession of the first wave of Islam, it was unable to reject it totally or to find it strange.

it is true that humanity was unable to practice it like Muslim community, where too its establishment was not complete.

It is true that various minor loyalties and fanaticisms continue to exist: loyalties to the fatherland, to race, nation, color and language.

It is true that the position of people of color in America and South Africa constitutes a serious and obstinate problem, and in Europe too in a more concealed manner.

Nonetheless, the concept of a single humanity still is an important element in the counsels of humanity today. This concept, delineated by Islam, is the root of all human thinking, from a theoretical stand point, while petty loyalties are vanishing and diminishing, being weak and baseless.

The first wave of Islam passed away, after delineating this concept with the help of the potentialities of human nature. But it left for the following wave not only these potentialities, but the resources it had itself brought into being. Humanity is better able to perceive and to apply the massage of Islam, and the element of surprise and amazement has disappeared.

### A NOBLE HUMANITY

When Islam first came, human dignity was restricted to certain classes and families. As for the masses, they were but scum, deprived of any dignity or worth.

Islam proclaimed with resonance the nobility of man as deriving from his very humanity, not from some incidental feature such as race, color, class, riches or position. The real right of man are similarly

derived from his humanity, which in turn derives from a single origin.

God says to man in the Qur'an :

"We have ennobled the sons of Adam, carried them on land and sea, nurtured them with lawful enjoyment, and preferred them to much of our creation". (al-Isr, v. 70)

"When your Lord said to the angels: I shall create a viceregent on earth". (al-Baqara, v. 30)

"When we said to the angles: prostrate before Adam, and they prostrated, all except Iblis who refused. Truly he acted arrogantly and is of the unbelievers". (al-Baqara, v. 34)

"And He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and the earth, all together, from him". (al-Jathiya, v. 13)

Thenceforth people knew that man, by his very nature, was noble in the sight of God, and that his nobility is inherent and independent of race, color, country, nation, tribe and family, or any other trivial and accidental feature. It depends only on his being a man, on his belonging to the species on which God has bestowed nobility.

These principles were not theoretical, they were realistic and practical and represented in the life of the Muslim community. Through that community, they spread all over the world, and were recognized by people who proceeded to put them into practice. The masses, the "scum", realized their nobility, that they possessed rights, the rights of a human being, they might demand reckoning of their rulers and princes, that they ought not to submit to humiliation, debase-

ment and insult. The rulers and princes were taught that they enjoyed no special rights denied to the masses, and that they might not insult the nobility of one who was not a prince or a ruler.

This represented a new birth for man, a birth greater than his first, material one. For what is man without the dignity and rights of man? What is man if those rights do not depend upon very existence and true nature, which never vary?

Abu Bakr R.A.A. began his caliphate saying: "I have been made ruler over you, but am not the best of you. If I act well, then help me. If I act badly, then correct me. obey me as long as I obey God and the Prophet. If I disobey them, I may not claim your obedience".

Umar ibn al-Khattab R.A.A. addressed the people concerning their rights with respect to their rulers as follows:

"O people! I do not send governors to you to peel the skins off you, nor to take your property from you. I send them only to instruct you in your faith and your path. Anyone who is mistreated, let him refer it to me, and by Him in whose hand is the soul of Umar, I will surely avenge him".

Amr ibn al-As jumped up and said:

"O Commander of the Faithful! If it were one of the amirs of the Muslims who mistreated a non-muslim subject, would you still exact your vengeance from him?"

Umar replied: "By Him in Whose hand is the soul of Umar, indeed I would take vengeance from him! How should I not when I saw the Prophet of God s.a.w taking vengeance on his own self? Do not beat the

people, for that will humiliate them. Do not separate them from their homes and families, for that will tempt them to sedition. Do not deprive them of their rights, for that will incline them to unbelief".

Uthman R.A.A. wrote to all the town of the Muslim realm as follows:

"I demand of my governors that they come to meet me every year at the time of the pilgrimage. I have been given rule over the community in order to enjoin good and forbid evil. Let then no imposition be made on anyone that I have not authorized. Neither I nor my governors have any rights over our people. It has been said in Madina that a group of people have been insulted and beaten. Whosoever makes such a claim, let him come to me at the pilgrimage season, and his due right shall be exacted either from me or from my governors. Or forgive one another, for God loves those who forgive one another".

The important thing, as we have previously stated, is that these were not purely theoretical principles or words that were spoken. They were realistically applied, and gained currency among peoples as a practical rule of conduct.

There is for example the well-known case of Ibn al-Qibti who engaged in a race with the son of Amr ibn al-As, the conqueror and governor of Egypt. When the son of Amr ibn al-As won he beat his opponent. His father complained to Umar ibn al-Khattab, who then avenged him in public during the season of the pilgrimage.

Writers usually content themselves with mentioning the justice of Umar, but the phenomenon

indicates also the liberating aspect of Islam for the minds and life on humanity.

Egypt was then a conquered country, newly converted to Islam. Al-Qibti was still a Copt, one of the masses of the conquered land. Amr ibn al-As was conqueror of the region, and its first governor for Islam. The rulers of the land before the Islamic conquest were the Byzantines, whose whips used constantly to descend on the backs of the peoples of their colonies. Possibly the back of the Copt still bore the traces of the whip of the Byzantines.

But the wave of liberation released by Islam in all parts of the earth made the Copt forget the whip of the Byzantines and his own humiliation. It made of him a free and dignified human being, who was angered when the son of the governor beat his son after racing with him. His anger at the wounded dignity of his son induced him to ride from Egypt to Madina, not traveling by aeroplane, car, steamer or train, but on camelback. He rode on for many long months simply in order to complain to the Caliph, the Caliph who had liberated him on the day when he conquered his country under the banner of Islam, who had taught him human dignity which he had forgotten beneath the whip of the Byzantines.

We should then realize the profundity of the liberation effected by Islam. It was not simply a question of Umar being just, for his justice cannot be invoked at all ages, but rather that the justice of Umar, which was derived from the path and system of Islam, had released a raging torrent of liberation in the world which re-established the dignity of man.

It is true that mankind never again attained this high level, but this concept delineated by Islam, of the

dignity, freedom and rights of the human being with respect to rulers and princes, left undeniable traces in the life of mankind. It is in part these traces that are impelling man to declare the "rights of man".

It is true that this declaration had not followed any practical path in human life. It is true that men in various parts of the globe are still meeting with contempt, humiliation, torture and deprivation. It is true that some philosophies reduce the status of man to something less than a tool, a means, and kill his freedom, dignity and higher qualities for the sake of increased production and income and market supremacy. Despite all this, the concept delineated by Islam still exists in the minds and imagination of mankind. It is not strange as it was when Islam first proclaimed it. Humanity is today better able to understand and imagine it; if again confronted with it in the coming wave of Islam, God willing.

### A SINGLE COMMUNITY

When Islam first came, it found people banded together on the basis of descent, race homeland or common interest and advantage. All these petty loyalties had no bearing on the true nature and essence of man; rather they were incidental attributes attaching themselves to the noble essence of man.

Islam spoke firmly and decisively concerning this important matter, and defined the relations of people to one another. It said: neither color, nor race, nor lineage, nor homeland, nor shared interests and advantages shall join people together or separate them; rather their belief, their relationship to their Lord, shall determine also their relationships to one another. It is their relationship to God which bestows upon them



their humanity, and should determine their course both in this world and the hereafter. The breath that has come to them from the spirit of God has made man into man; has given him dignity and subjugated to him all that is in the heavens and the earth. On this basis then people are united or separated, not on the basis of any incidental attribute that attaches itself to the essence of man.

The basis for association is belief, for belief is the most noble attribute of the human spirit. If this bond should disappear, there is no unity, and indeed no existence. Humanity must associate on the basis of its most noble attribute, not on the basis of fodder, pasture, and enclosure like the animals.

There are all over the world two parties: that of God and that of Satan. The party of God stands beneath the banner of God and bear His insignia. The party of the Devil embraces every community, group, people, race and individual who do not stand under the banner of God.

The *umma* (community) is the group of people bound together by belief, which constitutes their nationality. If there is no belief there is no *umma*, for there is nothing to bind it together. Land, race, language, lineage, common material interests are not enough, either singly or in combination, to form an *umma*, unless the bond of belief is in existence.

The bond must be an idea that vilifies heart and mind, a concept that interprets being and life, that joins to God, by a breath from Whose soul man became man, was distinguished from the beasts, and set aside in a God-given dignity.

God says in the Qur'an, addressing the believers of every land, age, race, color, tribe and group, throughout the centuries, speaking through Noah A.S. to Muhammad S.A.W.

"This your community is a single community, and I am your Lord, so worship Me". (al-Anbiya, v. 92)

God distinguished between people on the basis of belief, irrespective of ties of ancestry, race or homeland between them. He said: "Thou shall not find any people who believe in God and the Last Day who are loving to anyone who opposes God and His messenger, not though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers or their clan. Those — He has written faith upon their hearts, and He has confirmed them with a spirit from Himself; and He shall admit them into gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein to dwell forever, God being well-pleased with them, and they well-pleased with Him. Those are God's party; why, surely God's party, they are the prosperers".

(al-Mujadala, v. 22)

He has established only one cause for killing — when there is no other recourse — and that is striving for the sake of God (*jihad*). He has defined the aim of the believer and the aim of the non-believer in a clear and decisive manner:

"Those who believe fight for the sake of God. And those who disbelieve fight for the sake of idols. Fight then the followers of Satan, surely the guild of Satan is but feeble".

(al-Nisa; v. 76)

It appeared strange to all humanity at that time that association should be on the basis of belief, not race, color, commerce, or any secondary, incidental characteristic.

This "sectarianism", to use the present-day expression, was strange when first introduced by Islam, but today we see humanity absorbing it, and associating different fatherlands, peoples, languages, colors and races on the basis of belief.

It is true that they do not associate on the basis of belief in God, but on the basis of economic or social beliefs, humanity being in the low state that it is. Secondary factors appear to it as more important than a single great truth. But at any event it recognizes that the principle of association can be belief, can be a spiritual or intellectual bond! This represents an advance.

It remains now for humanity to rise towards something nobler and loftier, to proceed on the ascent towards the sublime summit, under the guidance of Islam in its coming wave. It will have at its disposal old and new resources; those of human nature, and the experiences passed through by mankind since the first wave of Islam.

However, when Islam came to associate people on the basis of belief, and made of it the principle for unity or separation, it did not make of reluctance to believe a reason for hostility. It did not allow intolerance to determine its relations with those who did not embrace its belief or associate on its basis.

God imposed the duty of *jihad* on the Muslims not so that they might force people to embrace Islam, but rather so that they might erect on earth its righteous, just and sublime system. People might choose the belief they wished in the protective shadow of this system, which embraced both Muslim and non-Muslim in perfect justice.

"There is no compulsion in religion, truth has become clear from error. Whosoever disbelieves in idols and believes in God, truly he has laid hold of the firm link which sunders not. God is All-hearing, All-knowing". (al-Baqara, 256)

The lands ruled by the system of Islam and governed according to the Law of Islam are regarded as the "Realm of Islam" (Dar al-Islam), irrespective of whether their inhabitants have all embraced the faith or some of them follow other religions. The lands not ruled by the system of Islam and not governed according to the Law of Islam constitute the "Realm of War" (Dar al-Harb), whatever their inhabitants may be.

Relations between the Realm of Islam and the Realm of War have not been neglected, but are precisely and systematically defined, in accordance with good character, purity and righteousness.

If the Realm of Islam is bound by treaty and agreement to the Realm of War, then the treaty and agreement must be observed, deceit and treachery not being permitted, and abrogation and surprise attack being forbidden. Unless, of course, the period of the treaty runs out or it is broken by the people of the Realm of War.

If there is a truce without any specific period, then it must be observed, abrogation being permitted if treachery is feared on the part of the Realm of War. Then the end of the truce must be openly proclaimed.

If war should take place, there are rules and regulations to be observed in regard to it. If the enemy should incline to peace, by signing a treaty, paying the

poll-tax and submitting to the Islamic system, while maintaining freedom of belief, he has the right to demand this of the Muslims.

"Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are the unbelievers who will not believe, those of them with whom thou hast made compact then they break their compact every time, not begin god-fearing. So, if thou comest upon them anywhere in the war, deal with them in such wise as to scatter the ones behind them; haply they will remember. And if thou fearest treachery anyway at the hands of a people, dissolve it equally; surely God loves not the tracherous. And thou are not to suppose that they who disbelieve have outstripped Me; they cannot frustrate My will. Make ready for them, whatever force and strings of horses you can, to terrify thereby the enemy of God, and your enemy, and others beside them that you know not; God knows them. And whatsoever you expend in the way of God shall be repaid you in full; you will not be wronged. And if they incline to peace, do thou incline to it; and put thy trust in God; He is the All-hearing, the All-knowing." (al-Anfal, vv. 55-61)

God also laid emphasis on faithfulness to treaties, rejecting "interest of the state" as a justification for breaking undertakings:

"Fulfill God's covenant, when you make covenant, and break not the oaths after they have been confirmed, and you have made God your surety; surely God knows the things you do. And be not as a woman who breaks her thread, after it is firmly spun, into fibers, by taking your oaths as mere mutual deceit, one nation being more numerous than another nation. God only ties you thereby; and certainly He will

make clear to you upon the Day of resurrection that whereon you were at variance". (al-Nahl, vv. 91-92)

If war takes place, then the honor of none is to be ravished; children, the aged and women are not to be killed; crops are not to be burnt; cattle are not to be destroyed; retaliation is not permitted; only those bearing arms against the Muslims may be attacked.

These are the instruction given by Abu Bakr to the army of Usama as he was on his way to do battle against the Byzantines:

"Do not practice treachery, do not be excessive in your dealings, do not betray, do not retaliate, do not kill children or the aged or women. Do not cut down or burn palm - trees or any fruit-trees. Do not slaughter camels except for food. You will encounter men who have isolated themselves in calls. Leave them to themselves, and pass on your way in the name of God."

I do not intend here to go exhaustively into the laws regulating dealings between the Realm of Islam and the Realm of War, and those between Muslims and non-Muslims. The present treatise is not the place for such a discussion. I wish only to point out the broad line established by Islam on this earth for the relations between opposing camps, whereas before it there existed no such rules. Before Islam, different communities interacted only with the sword or the law of intolerance. Everything was permitted to the strong, and the defeated enjoyed no rights at all.

These rules delineated by Islam did not disappear or vanish from the life of humanity. From the seventeenth century A.D. (eleventh century A.H.) onwards,

the world began to establish its mutual intercourse on the basis of these rules. it began to move towards the concept of "international law" and to erect international bodies for its strengthening in the nineteenth century A.D. These bodies have enjoyed varying success and failure up to the present, and considerable discussion has been devoted to the subject to international law.

Hence the system introduced by Islam is not as strange to humanity as it was when it first appeared. It is true that humanity has not attained the same ethical level reached by the early Muslim community in cooperation and intercourse with other communities. It is also true that serious setbacks have taken place in this century with regard to the theories of international law evolved by western jurisprudence. The principle of the declaration of war and the prohibition of the abrogation of treaties have been abolished.

Assassination has become more common among men than killing among beasts of the desert.

It is further true that the motives behind war and peace are still advantage and plunder, booty and markets, and are far below the belief, doctrine, virtue and justice envisaged by Islam as the aim of jihad.

Nonetheless, the concept of international relations being based on a law known to all parties concerned still exists. It was first brought into being by Islam, and that sublime and righteous path, ordained for humanity by God, gave it practical effect in the life of men.

If again men are summoned to this path, this concept will not appear unfamiliar or reprehensible to

them. Its sublime ethical foundation may be unknown to mankind as it flounders in the swamp of ignorance of divine guidance, but the concept itself is neither unfamiliar nor reprehensible.

Islam, which at first relied only on the potential of human nature in establishing its principles, will in its next wave of activity draw too on the familiarity of mankind with certain of its principles. It will draw too on the various experiences undergone by mankind. And, God willing, it will thereby be better enabled to begin again its forward march.



## *CHAPTER VIII*

### **FINALLY....**

In this brief discussion, we cannot deal in greater detail with the concept and traces left by Islam in the life, history and present state of humanity, traces which were not there before Islam and which have remained obstinately in place, however distorted or blunted, and however distant they may be from the lofty summit to which people attained by following the sublime and righteous path of divine origin.

These few examples we have indicated serve to give some idea of the tens of traces and effects left behind by that path. There are many analogous ones to be found over the space of fourteen hundred years.

A final word must be said at the end of this discussion, so that those who summon men to God and His path may not be dazzled by the existence of these favorable factors, and forget to provide for the obstacles and barriers that confront them in their task.

This word must concern opposing factor, the obstinate barriers in one's path.

Mankind in its entirety is today more distant from God than it used to be.

The clouds which weigh over man's nature are thicker and denser than before. The previous ignorance of God was based on a general ignorance, simplicity and primitiveness. That of the present is based on learning, complexity and frivolity.

Men were completely dazzled by the conquests of science in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The flight from the church and the god of the church, in whose name thinkers and men of learning were burnt or persecuted, was a mad and panic flight that stopped at nothing sacred.

It is true that science itself, from the beginning of the present century, has begun to lead the great scientists back towards God. Human nature, made wretched by its wandering in the desert, has begun to weary and to return to God. But the dazzlement remains, and this century will end before the wandering section of humanity begins its return from the wastes of godlessness.

The area and scope of worldly life has increased in the feelings and beings of people. It has extended thus because of the means of luxury and comfort produced by modern civilization, and people have come to sense the vastness and weight of worldly life. Science, culture and the arts have added whole new areas to the feelings and life of men.

If all this had arisen on the basis of knowledge of God, of the attributes of divinity and those of humanity in relation to God; on the basis of the profound truth that God has appointed man as His viceregent on earth, has subordinated to him all the earth contains, and equipped him with all necessary talents and gifts; that man is in all this being tested for the hereafter—it has arisen on this healthy foundation, the new areas added to the perception and life of men by science and civilization, would have been areas added too to religious belief, bringing men closer to God and His path of righteousness, namely Islam.

But all this arose on a basis of flight from the tyrannical church and a god in whose name it oppressed mankind. So it was an area added to man's distance from God, an obstacle in the path to Him, one which must be taken into account by those who summon men to Islam.

It is true that mankind is wretched and is tired of bearing the burden of its materialistic civilization and luxury. It is true that corruption and dissolution, nervous and mental disease, intellectual and sexual perversion are eating away the body of western civilization, destroying nations and individuals, and are forcibly opening people's eyes to evil and corruption.

However, humanity persists in its bestial excitement, its lunatic intoxication, its uproar and confusion. The present century will pass away before eyes are fully opened, brains are cleared of their intoxication, humanity recovers from its daze.

The first states of ignorance of divine guidance were connected to the primitiveness of nomadic life, which doubtless had its influence upon them. The traditions and customs of nomadism to a large extent determined people's conduct. Even though these made of the conflict between those calling for Islam and those ignorant of divine guidance a harsh and violent contest, nonetheless it was a clear and explicit one. Human nature was able to respond clearly, from behind the clouds of obstinacy and arrogance; both belief and disbelief were clearly defined. All of this was better than flexibility, indifference and frivolity.

Humanity is today suffering from frivolity and indifference with regard to all beliefs, ideologies and doctrines. It is also suffering from hypocrisy, deceit and baseness. All of these are barriers on the path of summoning men to God and obstacles in the way of righteously pursuing the path of God.

We should not neglect or underestimate these and many similar matters, so that workers for Islam should not be dazzled by favourable factors and fail to equip themselves adequately.

How may they equip themselves? There is only one thing with which they may provide themselves: fear of God, consciousness of the reality of God, direct cooperation with God; and absolute trust in His explicit promise: 'The victory of the believers is a duty incumbent upon Us'. (al-Rum, v. 48)

What is required is that a believing group place their hands in the hands of God and then march forth, the promise of God to them being the overriding reality for them, and the pleasure of God being their first and last aim.

Through this group God's way for the realization of His path will be applied. It will disperse the clouds of ignorance from human nature. It will give expression to the will of God that His word be supreme on earth and the reins of power be in the hands of His faith:

"Many paths and institutions have passed away before you: journey in the land, and behold how was the end of those that cried lies. This is an exposition for mankind, and a guidance, and an admonition for

such as are godfearing. Faint not, neither sorrow; you shall be supreme if you are believers. If a wound touches you, a like wound has already touched the heathen; such days we deal out in turn among men, that God may know who are the believers and that He may take witnesses from among you. Truly God loves not the evildoers — and that God may test the believers and blot out the unbelievers”.

(Al-Imran, vv. 37-141)

## **GLOSSARY OF ARABIC NAMES AND TERMS**

**ABBAS IBN ABDUL MUTTALIB:** Uncle of the Prophet Muhammad and ancestor of the Abbasid dynasty of caliphs. Died 652/3 A.D.

**ABD MANAF:** Great-grandfather of the Prophet.

**ABU BAKR:** One of the earliest converts to Islam from the ruling class of Quraysh. He accompanied the Prophet on the emigration from Makkah to Madina in 622 A.D., and his daughter Aisha was one of the Prophet's wives. During the illness that culminated in the death of the Prophet, Abu Bakr was deputed by him to lead the public prayer. After the death of the Prophet in 632 A.D., he became caliph by consensus of the Muslim community. His rule lasted until 634, and he directed the expansion of the Islamic realm outside the Arabian peninsula. He is regarded as the first of the four rightly-guided caliphs (al-khulafa arrashideen), who exercised their power on the basis of communal consensus and the practice of the Prophet.

**ABU SUFYAN:** Commander of the pagan forces of Makkah against the Muslims. His conversion to Islam occurred only shortly before the conquest of Makkah for Islam. He died in 680 A.D.

**ALI:** Son of the Prophet's paternal uncle Abu Talib, who acted as guardian for the Prophet after he had

been orphaned by the death of his mother. He was also related to the Prophet by marriage, having taken his daughter Fatima as wife. He was one of the earliest to believe in the Prophet's message, and the constant companion of the Prophet during his lifetime. He was the fourth and last of the rightly-guided caliphs, ruling from 656 to 661 A.D. He met his death at the hands of an assassin of the Kharijite sect.

**AMR IBN AL-AS:** Conqueror and governor of Egypt for Islam.

**ARAFAT:** A plain near Makkah where the pilgrims gather to sacrifice an animal in memory of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son. The accomplishment of the sacrifice marks the end to the pilgrimage ceremonies.

**BADR:** First battle between the Makkah forces and the Muslims. The Muslims defeated a numerically superior force commanded by Abu Sufyan.

**FITRA:** A concept of great importance; pure, an essential human nature, with which Islam is entirely in accord. Whereas 'human nature' is a phrase with pessimistic connotations, implying the weakness and tendency to sin of man, Fitra is an entirely positive and optimistic concept. It is elaborated in chapter five of the present work.

**HADITH:** The collected and tabulated traditions concerning the deeds and words of the Prophet. These form the second source of Islamic law and doctrine, after the Holy Qur'an. The authenticity of each Hadith must be vouched for by a chain of transmission (isnad), reaching back from the compiler to one or

other codifying of the Prophetic traditions became one of major branches of the Islamic religious sciences. The two collections regarded as most authoritative are those of Bukhari and Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj.

**IBN ISHAQ:** The earliest biographer of the Prophet. His account is available only in the recension of Ibn Hisham, translated into English by Alfred Guillaume under the title 'The Life of Muhammad' (published London 1955)

**KA'BA:** the cubic structure in the middle of the shrine at Makkah containing the Black Stone. The Ka'ba according to Islamic belief is the first house of worship of the One True God established on earth by the Prophet Abraham. It later became polluted by polytheism, and was restored to the worship of God by Muhammad in 630 A.D., when Makkah was conquered for Islam.

**MU'AWIYA:** Son of Abu Sufyan, contestant of the Caliphate with Ali and founder of the Umayyad dynasty. This dynasty introduced the monarchical principle of hereditary succession into Islamic affairs.

**MUZDALIFA:** Place near Arafat where the pilgrims spend the night.

**QURAYSH:** The tribe inhabiting pre-Islamic Makkah. It subsisted chiefly by trade with Syria to the north and the Yemen to the South, and on the wealth brought to the city by the pilgrims to the Ka'ba. The Prophet belonged to the Hashimite branch of the Quraysh, but the majority of the Quraysh opposed his mission and the early Muslim community found a home in the city of Yathrib, later renamed as Madina.



**UHUD:** The second battle fought by the Muslims. It ended in their defeat by the Meccans.

**UMAR IBN. AL-KAHTTAB :** Second of the rightly-guided caliphs. At first a violent opponent of the new faith, after his conversion he became one of the most ardent champions of Islam. During his caliphate (634-644 A.D.) Iran was added to the realm of Islam. He continued the frugal and scrupulously just manner of rule of the Prophet and Abu Bakr. He was assassinated by a Persian slave, Abu Lu'lu.

**USAMA:** A companion of the Prophet and a general in the Muslim armies.

**UTHMAN:** Third of the rightly-guided caliph. ruled from 644 to 656. He was related to the Umayyads, and the circumstances of his death provided the pretext whereby Mu'awiya disputed the caliphate of Ali.

**ZAKAT:** The 'purifying tax' payment of which is incumbent on every Muslim and which renders 'pure' and legitimate the property he owns. Its payment constitutes one of the Five Pillars of Islam, together with the profession of faith, the daily prayer, the fast from dawn to dusk in the month of Ramadan and the pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in the life time of the believers.